160 acres per Lee + Joel Hefley

THE LIFE OF JEFFERSON LEMINISKY HEFLEY, Sr.

WRITTEN BY HIS SON

~~Jefferson L. Hefley, Jr.~~

~~MAURICE~~ HEFLEY

Preface by ↑

also 82 & - problems 6/93

Missing pages

91, 92, 93, 94, 95 + 151

Copies mailed to
Carol Hunt
Fern Arnspiger
Gladys Miller - orig copy + new copy

Make copies of pages 82, 83 + 84

Need 91, 92, 93, 94 + 95 - beginning of Chapter 9 -

Copy of 96 in case pages don't match

Pages 83 is a continued page but not from 82 - ??? Why? wrong # ?

91, 92, 93, 94, 95

Make copies for
(1) - Jodi
(2) Lee + (4) Earl

(1) Page 83 is a continued page but NOT from 82. why? some lost or mis numbered pages? 6/93

Missing pages 91, 92, 93, 94 + 95
The beginning of Chapter 9 (entitled Westward - The March of Empire)

This is a story of the life of Jefferson Leminisky Hefley, written by his son, Maurice Hefley. The Hefley's and the Walchers are related.

This is a story of the life of Jefferson
Beasley Farley, written by his son,
Maurice Farley. The Farley's and the
Kelchers are related.

FORWARD

This is my father's story. He was there, he knew what he wanted to say and he could have said it, but somehow he just never got around to doing it. My contribution is that I finally bullied him into getting started. Some of it he told me but most of it he wrote out. It might be said that I edited it, if it can be said that so rank an amateur as I can edit. At any rate, I helped put it together into a form which we hope is readable. If it arouses your interest, we will be happy. If is does hnot, we will still be glad we set it down, because we believe it is something that needed to be written, and if no one else likes it, we at least will derive pleasure from browsing over it for many years to come.

This is the story of a family, but in a larger sense, it is the story of an era. An era which will not be seen again on this earth and for that reason, if for no other, one worthy of being commemorated and brought to the attention of this and future generations.

It has no hero, that is, no single, animate hero. Those who must have steir herois in the flesh will have to look elsewhere. We saw a hero in it, my Dad and I. One more powerful, more impelling, more impulsive, yes, and more foolish than mere flesh and blood. This is the spirit of the pioneer, the urge that kept his looking for new worlds. The drive without which this nation could never have been, and without which today it could not continue to be.

I tried to materialize this hero. Not in a person but in the immediate and concrete thing which seemed to be the pioneer's objective. I said the homestead was the hero, the hundred and si xty acres which this family, as with most families which came "West", was seeking. But my father said "No". This hundred and sixty acres, this material goal, this symbol of affluence and means of livelihood; it was just that and nothing more. As the gold-seeker, the fur-trader, the colonist along our eastern shores. Even as Columbus himself, these pioneers carried with them a vision. In this case it was a vision of land, a new land from which they could hew a new culture, but deep within all these were other forces only remotely related to the vision of the moment. These were the hope of adventure, the urge to see and do things not seen nor done before. The desire for new i ndependence, a new self-sufficiency and self-respect. In short, the spirit of pioneering.

He did not try to explain this to me. He had already put it into words more than twenty years ago. He dug it out and showed it to me. I present it here in th belief that it may help you even as it did me to see the point.

In the stories of old there are strange fairy tales
that tell of a siren song
That often lured ships from the well cahrted way
Into seas so rough and strong
That the ships couldn't live in the boisterous waves
But crashed on the rocks e'er long.

That song was the voice of the sailor's Unkown
As he stood on the far frontier
And listened, entranced, to that beckoning call.
So too with the Pioneer.
And these who were brave dared to listen with joy
But timid ones drew not near.

Yet the daring went forward to blazen a trail
Over wild, untrampled sod.
The years hurried by..fair columns soon stood
Where pioneer feet had trod.
They had led the world on in its search after truth
And brought it xxxxxxxxxx nearer to God.

'Twere a boon just to be a lone pioneer
With courage rare and strong
To go out and over the farthest frontier
Away from the common or wrohg
Maybe fall in the quest of a fine, larger life,
Then to sleep and to dream of the Song.

But did our title then become meaningless? This piece of earth about which we had been writing...did it now contain the essence of our subject? Must we now seek another phrase to epitomize our narrative? Not at all. While our hero has taken on a broader aspect, his vision remains this bit of land. His conscious efforts are directed toward it, his sweat is put into it and his body nurtured by it. But there is more..who can put the soul of America into a single phrase?

So I agreed that here was our hero. This was the thing on which we could hinge our story. It is an ageless hero as virile today as eighty years ago, or a hundred and eighty, as much so as when Columbus set his course into the limitless Western Sea. The biograp hy of this hero is the story of America and our little segment of that story is of minor consequence. We have set it down here in the hope it may be of interest to some who might have injoyed living it and even that some historian of the future may pick up here a tiny impression of what life was when our Southwest was new.

Maurice Hefley.

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John Walcher-----Nephew Mrs. J. L. Hefley Page 18

Aunt Lucretia---Big Al, A.M.B. Walcher's mother "19
Gladys Walcher Miller's Grandfather

U.S. Walcher--Another of Aunt Lucretia's sons
brother of A.M.B.

Bob Walcher's place -5 miles s.e. of South Haven

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Slate Creek Tree hung 3 horse theives

Illinois School --Gladys Walcher Miller first
attended school there, still stands
south of Wellingtonin 1972

A.M.B. Walcher (Big Al) Washer, Henry, was a brother of
J. L. Hefley.

Chapter 1

THE URGE

My father, Jefferson Leminisky Hefley, had an itching foot. He may have come by it as a result of his experiences in the War between the States. Serving with the First Ill. Cavalry, in the first year of the war, he had been captured along with the customary promise that they would not again enter the service. He felt keenly his sense of duty but he also held sacred his promise not to re-enlist. Added to this were the dire threats and ugly rumors from both North and South as to the fate of any parolee who should again fall into enemy hands after having re-entered the conflict. So he welcomed the chance to go to St. Louis and join a small wagon train on it's way to California.

His wanderings continued for about a year and a half. A not particularly eventful trip "across the plains" was followed by some months as an itinerant prospector and a hitch in a logging camp. Finding little to attract him in this kind of life and being no doubt, a little homesick, he wangled passage on a small ship to Central America and hence home. Since the country was still at war, it was impossible to land at any of the southern ports, so he finally got home to Illinois by way of New York. Thus, for a poor country boy of his time, he had already seen a lot of the world.

But my memory does not indicate that my mother obfected to his wanderlust. I do not recall an occasion upon which we set out to conquer a new world, that she expressed undue displeasure at the prospect. Perhaps she toofelt the urge to examine the grass on the other side of the fence, and, perhaps, both were endowed with this trait without their knowledge or choosing.

For the pioneer urge had been strong in the Hefleys and the Walchers for generations. They had come originally just two small families from Germany and settled along with a group of German families in Pennsylvania. Family legend has it that an epidemic of some sort developed on board ship, the Hefley father died leaving his wife and little boy. The Walcher mother also died leaving her husband and two or three small children. Some time later, having arrived and settled in their new homes, the remaining parents married each other. In telling this story, my mother would always end with, "and it was from that one little boy that all the Hefleys in America are descended".

Be that as it may, the German colony or a sizable portion of it migrated in a generation or so to North Carolina and thence, after some additional generations, to Illinois. After the manner of honey bees, swarming time seemed to come to the colony, but, as in the case of bees, all stayed together to form a new hive. And it was to Illinois in Montgomery County,

that my father returned after the war, to select a bride from among the Walchers, Clementine, and to settle down to farming, the traditional family vocation. It was therethat I was born. My earliest recollections are of preparations for departure to a new land and a better life.

Getting a home started had presented many obstacles to my father. He seems to have been rather unsuccessful and dissatisfied in Illinois. In retrospect, I rather think he never knew why. I believe the reason was that Illinois was no longer the frontier. The pioneer urge was strong within him and his appetite for the freer life had been whetted by his experiences during the war. Kansas had been much in the news during the war and after. Reports of wild and reckless events were commonplace, but it was the frontier of the day and to him, it must have looked like the New Jerusalem.

All through the summer of 1871, I heard the grownups talk about Kansas. My father's older sister, Aunt Elizabeth, had married John Jones, and a year or two before, had departed for Kansas, settling in what was then Howard County later changed to Chautauqua, Co. This was then wild country to the West only a few ranches and cow towns, to the South, Indian Territory. But they sent back reports which seemed to be just what my father wanted to hear.

He had contracted to buy the farm on which we had lived for several years, but it seemed he never could accumulate enough cash to amount to anything. Each year's crop got us by but left little to pay on mortgages. He probably felt relief at being able to unload the debt and drive away, a poor but free man. So to Kansas we were bound.

I had been five the winter before. There were two other children by this time, Henry and Hank. Joe Rumpel was going with us, he was a distant cousin of my mother's. He stayed at our place for some weeks, ostensibly to help get ready for the move, but I think mostly to have free room and board.

And then there was Anni e. That is all the name I knew then or remember now. She was about twelve and alone in the world. My folks had taken her in and she worked hard to pay her way; helping with the home work and looking after us children. Annie had relatives in Kansas and the plan was to ultimately place her in their hands.

I remember little of that trip. I know we had a wagon and a team of horses. Little else but the clothes on our backs, a little bedding and enough provision, we hoped, to see us through. I remember we crossed the Mississippi at St. Louis on a ferry and many of the streams across Missouri were spanned by covered bridges, wood trusses, with roofs over them to protect the wood from decay. Some of these required the payment of a toll.

The Paw Paws were ripe. We children thought it's fruit excellent, there being, of course, no other fruit, confection, pastry or any of the nicities of civilized diet available on such a trip . Thepawpawpawaw apples made quite an impression on us.

There was one incident of the trip I do remember, however which estabilised in my mind the code by which my father lived. I found out onmmany occasions later that he never deviated from it and it set a pattern for his children which in three quarters of a century has never ceased to have it's influence upon us.

We had camped near a settler's cabin and while my mother began preparations for the evening meal, Pa set off for the house to negtiate a deal of some sort, water, food, or feed for the horses, I am sot sure what. But upon his return, some one had placed a fence rail upon the camp fire. No doubt Pa remembered too many hours of toil in their preparation to take easily to their wanton destruction. But more than that, this rail belonged to some one, it was not ours to destroy.

Ma denied any knowledge of the matter and then, after some hesitency, Joe allowed as how he had put it there. After all, it was only an old fence rail. But Pa insisted it was a good rail, and good or bad, we had not the right to burn it. Joe never saw the fine point of integrity involved. The result was that Pa had to terminate the matter with, "We'll have no trouble in the country we pass through and we will destroy no one's property."

But at the time, the important thing to me was that now, I, too, was "crossing the plains."

Chapter 11

Howard County

I don't believe we knew where we were going when we got to Kansas, and it is certain my father had no job nor prospect of any kind awaiting him. This reckless spirit seems foolhardy to us now, but then, the country was filled with that spirit of adventure and determination to expand. Ours was only one of thousands of families which set out on similar expeditions and with similar uncertainties awaiting them. Their bones and their gear are still being turned up throughout the plains, the mountains and the deserts of our West.

Though our journey was comparatively short and without hardships, we still had to make our living in our new home, wherever that was. Our only guide post seems to have been family ties, as had always been the case since the families first came to America.

My father had an uncle, Lee Hefley, living in Independence, Kansas. We stopped there a day or two but soon pushed on to see Aunt Elizabeth and Uncle John Jones south and west of Independence down near the Indian Territory. Whether or not we had any intention of staying there, we found ourselves forced to do so. A week or so after arrival, one of our horses took sick and died. There were few horses in the country and we had no money with which to purchase one had it been available. This looked like the outer edge of civilization anyway, and that seems to have been the principal thing we sought. Parts of the state, of course, had been settled for a good while, but here along the southern border the country was still very wild and had very few settlers. There was little land in cultivation as yet, only the best bottom lands along the streams. It was a rugged country, hilly and covered with timber. There seemed no need to look elsewhere. I surmise that had my father realized the speed of the westward flow of settlement, he would have found a way to keep going to some place where he could live a few years longer without civilized encroachment.

John Burch was a solid citizen. He apparently was the most solid in the entire community. He lived there in a little valley among the hills and had establisked some sort of title to, or controlling interest in, most of the desirable land up and down the creek for some distance. In the light of subsequent events and my future knowledge, i now question whether he ever had any real right to the property.

My father thought he had, however, and it seemed this was just where Pa wanted to locate. So he worked out a deal to trade our remaining horse for a tract of this land, and we had a home. I don't know how big it was but there was a little creek across it and some bottom land suitable for cultivation. Just how that was to be accomplished without horses must have given Pa some uneasy moments. But I

Chapter II

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suppose he figured we had to get started some place and the only way to start was with land.

That winter was pretty lean. The first order of business was, of course, to get a place to live. Pa and Joe Rumpel soon had a log cabin under construction. Neither of them was a carpenter nor a mechanic of any kind, b ut both had worked some in the timber and were good axe men. So the cabin was built mostly of logs taken from near at hand. There was a large fireplace made of stone picked up from the hillside nearby. Two great flat stones were laid in front for a hearth, but aside from that, the cabin's floor was only the compact soil. At least we were warm and dry for the winter; although it was a very rude structure. It had only the one large room but that seemed to be enough. Joe Rumpel left in a short while and Annie stayed only through that first winter. We still had a sizable family, however, with three small boys and Orana, who was born the following spring.

We had no furniture except such as could be made with an axe or hatchet and cooking was done over the open fire on the hearth. Our circumstances were typical of the time and place. The few scattered settlers around us were equipped about the same as we were.

Eating was undoubtedly our greatest problem. Our bread stuff was corn meal; flour was almost unheard of in the community. There had been some corn raised in the vicinity and there was a mill for grinding it a little way up the creek. A few times we ran out and had to grind meal ourselves on an old coffee grinder. This left it pretty coarse but my mother managed some way to make it into cakes or mush that could be eaten. I don't recall ever having to go to bed really hungry.

But we fared somewhat better than many of the settlers because my father was a hunter. There was almost no meat from domestic sources, but the timber and c reek bottoms abounded with game of many sorts. Pa owned an old long squirrel rifle which was as good a gun as could be had at the time for any but the largest game, and he used it with great success. Much of the time we had a freshly killed carcass of deer hanging about the place. Sometimes when we would get a little short on meat Pa would roll out of bed before daylight and hie himself to the hills. Before the first crow hollered, he would be on a stand with his rifle. About the time we children were at breakfast, we would hear his walking across the yard and a freshly killed turkey would be plopped down just inside the door. We would all raise a Hilarious shout; meat had come home again. So it was, not only deer and turkey but squirrels, rabbits, quail, Prairie chicken, ducks and geese, all from time to time paid tribute to his marksmanship.

Sometimes he would go to the post office and be gone so long my mother would be worrying lest something had happendd .. and sure enough it had. After a while he would leisurely wander in with a fine string of fish he had stopped long enough to catch out of some stream along the way.

And so we lived .

I was a hunter too. At this stage my hunting was mostly a repressed desire, but I remember one instance in which I got my c hance. Though even here I was largely a spectator.

We had a dog-every one always had a dog. I don't know where he came from and I am sure he would have been afraid to trace his lineage, but he was mostly hound of some sort and an excellent squirrel dog. We knew that when he said a squirrel was in a tree it was there. He couldn't be fooled by travel from tree to tree through the branches, and we liked to take him with us on any excursion for the excitement he was sure to create.

One day Annie and I had started some place on an errand with our faithful friend beside us. We had not gone far when he spotted a squirrel and promptly chased it up a tree. We knew it was someplace in the tree though we couldn't see it because he said it was. Finally Annie climbed the tree and after some difficulty located the squirrel in a hollow. She reached in, got a hold on it's tail and pulled. The squirrel pulled too but as he came slowly out of the hole, he suddenly released his grip and turned to sink his teeth into the heel of the hand that held it. Blood squirted and just as suddenly Annie released her grip.

The dog had been watching with great intensity the little drama unfolding above, and he was prepared to play his part at the proper moment. As the squirrel dropped from Anni e's hand, he shifted swiftly under it and it dropped squarely into his mouth without ever touching the ground.

It was the kids turn, bloody but unbowed, to bring in the game.

Our wild neighbors did not always stay up in the hills. One morning we heard a considerable commotion in the back-yard and upon investigation, discovered a couple of turkey gobblers hotly mixing it up. One was a wild turkey which evidently had wandered down into the yard having discovered our tame flock without noting the presence of human habitat-ion.

My father was gone somewhere with his gun so Ma sent Annie to the nearest neighbors several hundred yards down the creek to see if the man could come with his gun and kill the invader. Having been aroused to a rage such that our presence did not bother him at all, the stranger continued

the attack and the bitter duel proceeded, but, alas; it was over too soon. Before the neighbor could arrive with a gun, our gobbler was flat on the ground and his wild brother had stalked with a victor's strut from the field of battle disappearing in the hills.

On another occasion, we had arisen, had our breakfast as usual and Pa had gone out to work. My mother began her morning chores of cleaning up about the cabin. Having arrived at the point of bed making, she pulled back the covers and picked up the pillows. There in a nest coil under one of them lay a pretty little spotted snake about three feet long. Of course she screamed and excitement ran high for some time. It turned out to be only an innocent, non-poisonous and very scared little reptile, but I don't believe that Ma ever consented to think that it belonged there under her pillow.

And there was the time the deer ran through our garden. Some hounds got him up back in the hills somewhere and were hot on the trail. He was running hard but was by no means exhausted or in immediate danger of losing the battle when he came out suddenly upon our little clearing. Pa had inclosed our garden patch with a rail fence and before the deer realized he was approaching an outpost of civilization he was almost on top of that fence. No doubt he was startled but he never hesitated. With the greatest nonchalance in the world he cleared the fence without ever breaking stride. A few long strides and he was across and over the fence on the opposite side, disappearing as quickly as he had come.

I was in the yard watching and almost before I realized what was happening, the deer had come and gone, but, small boy that I was, the very sight of him was an immeasurable thrill. The ease and speed with which he took those fences made an impression I never forgot. I learned then, as I did many times afterward, that he was a worthy antagonist in any battle of the wild.

Wolves or coyotes, and in my young mind there was no distinction, were commonplace. As a matter of fact, most of the grown-ups made little distinction either. However, there were some wolves, both the black timber wolf and the grey wraith of the plains. We had heard many scarey stories about wolves but actually they kept their distance, as is their custom, and were seldom seen. Their cries in the distance, however, were heard almost nightly.

One bright winter morning we were all awakened by their howling, much closer and from more sources than usual. We all got up and out before daylight to listen to them. It was a beautiful morning, clear, calm and frosty, and the howling continued until after sunup. As the red morning light slipped up over the hills, we saw the wolves on the nearby ridges in at least three directions from the house.

It was evidently about as exciting for the grown-ups as it was for the youngsters, because in no tine at all, men, horses, dogs and guns appeared from everywhere for a wolf hunt. My father was in the midst of it all. They took off in a mad sc ramble, but I am afraid there were more riders than hunters. The wolves were a long time gone before anyone could locate a trail, but the chase developed into quite a story and a close call for my father.

He had drifted away from the crowd and was riding rapidly along a rough hillside when his horse stumbled and fell. It slid and rolled down the hill, winding up with it's back against a rock and it's feet uphill so that it could not rise. Pa's foot was caught underneath in such a manner that he could not get loose.

The horse was excited and did considerable struggling without success and without releasing the foot. It looked pretty hopeless and there was no one within sound of voice or gun to come the the rescue. Gradually the horse seemed to get discouraged with the struggling and by calm talk and slow movements, Pa finally got him perfectly still. Then sitting facing the horse and pushing hard on the ground behind with his hands and on the horse with his knees, he was able to develop enough of an opening to withdraw his leg. He got up, took the horse by it's feet and heaved it over so that his legs pointed down hill. From this position it could easily scramble to it's feet and the yrouble was over with only minor injuries to horse and man.

There was always talk of Indians, though I think there were none at all in the country. Certainly none who were very wild except in the minds of small boys. But I suppose since the Pilgrim father, playing indian had always been one of boy's prime desires. One day we were at the Jones place. They had several boys a little older than we, and since the had been in Kansas longer than we, they were telling us all about Indians. When we decided to play that we were Indians on the war path, we were promptly informed that Indians on the war path always painted their hands and faces. We could paint ours with the ripe polk berries that were all around us in the brush. So we crushed the berries in our hands, rubbed the beautiful juice all over our faces and necks, got sticks for guns and went on the war path. We raided the house with mighty yells and war whoops. No one was scared, but our mothers chief concern was for the possible defects of the juice on our skins. It didn't hurt us but by the time they got us cleaned up, I think they wished it had.

As in any new community, people of different environment

and character, and from all walks of life had assembled here in the neighborhood. But in the main, they were good people from a civilized culture where schools and churches existed. So there soon developed a strong sentiment for a meeting house, a place for school, for church and for any sort of public gathering. The men got together and built a rather large log house. It was built the same as their cabins, mostly with axes and a cross-cut saw, but it did have a floor, rough lumber sawed out by a little mill in the county. All the furniture was made from split logs. It was known as the school house and it was here that I started to school, but many types of meetings were held there.

Someone agitated for a Sunday School. The biggest problem seemed to be finding anyone with the religious leadership such a project required. Finally John Burch was prevailed upon to take the job as Sunday School Superintendent. This was probably a reflection of his standing in the community and not an indication of his qualifications for that work. But he accepted the office and served for some time.

Chapter 111

The Seamier Side

It is no secret that our West was settled not alone by good families who came to establish new homes and develop a new land for the greater good of our country and all its people, but, also, by thieves, gamblers, drunkards and all-around lawless characters of every type who came because it was too unhealthy to stay where they were. The same freedom from controls and restrictions that brought the peaceful settler to make his living in his own way attracted also the other kind; he too, bent upon making his living in his own way.

Some activity of a lawless nature went on all the time in the new settlements, and there was no law or legal authority to cope with it. Any law that might have existed was inoperative because there was no court to enforce it. Killings on the frontier were frequent and the crime often went unpunished. Many times it was not even considered a crime since, with no higher court to settle issues, settlement resolved itself upon those concerned. It was the code of the times that settlement with guns should frequentle be the first resort rather than the last.

Probably no where in the West was the wanton taking of human life as prevalent as modern writers of fiction would have us believe. On the other hand, even in our own little community, it was undoubtedly more prevalent than one of my years would note or remember . I did know of several cases, however, one of which will serve to illustrate the conditions.

Our post office was St. Paul, two or three miles west of our place. The town had little in the way of business except a general store, a blacksmith shop, a saloon and a dance hall. These seem to have been the requisites of any frontier town. And while some, at least, of the services they dispensed were necessary to the settlers, and all were desirable in the eyes of some portion of them, they also served to bring each person for miles around in contact at one time or another with every other person. Add to this the fact of the "guns first" code, and the constant presence of a sizable group of drifters of questionable character and it is easy to visualize the explosive nature of frontier community life.

Public dances at the dance hall were frequent, and were notably a feature of Saturday night. No one was barred and of course many of the worst element were always in attendance. Liquor flowed freely and gambling was probably as big an attraction and as important a feature of the party as the dancing itself.

On one particular Saturday night the boisterous

Chapter III

The Seamier Side

It is no secret that our West was settled not alone by good families who came to establish new homes and develop a new land for the greater good of our country and all its people, but, also, by thieves, gamblers, drunkards and all-around lawless characters of every type who came because it was too unhealthy to stay where they were. The same freedom from controls and restrictions that brought the peaceful settler to make his living in his own way attracted also the other kind; he too, bent upon making his living in his own way.

Some activity of a lawless nature went on all the time in the new settlements, and there was no law or legal authority to cope with it. Any law that might have existed was inoperative because there was no court to enforce it. Killings on the frontier were frequent and the crime often went unpunished. Many times it was not even considered a crime since, with no higher court to settle issues, settlement resolved itself upon those concerned. It was the code of the times that settlement with guns should frequently be the first resort rather than the last.

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activity was in full swing with perhaps a greater number of bottles than usual having been emptied. Suddenly in the midst of the festivities, without warning, and without any but the principals ever knowing just why, shooting b egan close outside the building. Soon it seemed to be everywhere, inside and out. In two or three minutes it was over as suddenly as it had started. But the party was over too, and two men lay dead on the floor. Two or three others had been wounded.

About the time the screaming of the crowd had died away sufficiently to hear the moans of the wounded, and the sobs of the bereaved, a man with gun in hand appeared in the doorway. He strode several steps into the room, pushing everyone from his path and asked loudly, "Is Pete Baker in here?"

Someone pointed to one of the bodies on the floor. The Gunman walked up to it and stared down a moment. His expression reflected astonishment, then remorse, as he almost yelled, "God; Pete, did you get it?" With a series of oaths and uncertain glances around at the crowd, he explained to all and sundry, "Folks, God knows I never meant that for him, I'm sure damed sorry. Pete was my best friend." He walked quickly to the door, flourished his gun rather wildly and foolishly over his head, stepped into the darkness and was gone.

That was the end of the affair. I do not remember that onyone was ever arrested or tried for the events of the evening. They were of course the prime subject of discussion at home the next day, and I remember asking Pa why they were tryint to kill each other. He answered, "Oh, I don't know. it was over an old grudge of some sort. Some of the men had been threatening to shoot each other and they just happened to meet there."

The greater crime, but one even more frequently resorted to, was that of horse or cattle stealing. One night probably a year after our arrival in Howard County, ten or twelve head of the best horses in the community disappeared. Everyone was hopping mad, everyone was out looking for stray horses, and everyone was doing a great deal of talking about who might have done it and what should be done about it. Several men, very well known around the neighborhood, turned up missing at the same time and it did not take long for two and two to add up to four.

The missing men, though not the horses, showed up again in two or three days. Upon hearing of the murmurings against them, they were filled with righteous, or self-righteous indignation and indulged themselves in some dire murmurings of their own against their informal accusers.

Among the loudest of the accusers had been my uncle Joh

John Jones. Being a peacefil, law-abiding man himself, and knowing the lack of respect in which such men as his newly made antagonists held the life of an enemy, he was naturally much perturbed. To come a little more forcefully to the point, he was scared to death. Not that I blame him.

Not only was Uncle John a peaceful man, he was not even a hunter, as my father was, and did not possess a gun of any kind. He came to our place one day poured out his troubles to my father, swearing the "go and come" fellows were going to kill him. He wanted to borrow my father s gun to protect himself. I guess Pa wasn't nearly as wrought up over the matter as was Uncle John. In addition, he knew Uncle John did not know a thing in the world about using a gun and likely would only increase his chances of getting killed if occasion demanded that he defend himself thus. So he refused the request, but he couldn't allay Uncle John's fears and the refusal to let him have the gun only made them worse.

One of Pa's most treasured possessions was a hunting knife he had picked up on the trail when crossing the plains to California in 1862. One day on the trail he had been riding tail behing the little wagon train with which he had traveled, when the wheel of the rear wagon struck the handle of the knife where it lay buried in the sand. Kicking the blade up , it flashed in the sum. A handle had been broken by the impact of the metal tire and Pa carried it for years with a patch he hastily fashioned from wood. We would point this out to our friends when telling the story of the kni fe. Later he replaced the entire handle with one of deer horn. He kept it and used it for sixty years and it is still in the family.

When Uncle John discovered he could not borrow the rifle, he asked for the knife, feeling that anything was better than what he had. So it was given to him, and he kept it for some time until the trouble blew over. Whether or not it had any effect in protecting him, I do not know, but at any rate he was not seriously molested. However, his possession of the knife served to involve my father to some extent.

He had not lost stock himself and in his quiet way had remained non-commital in the controversy. But the presence of his knife in the enemy camp determined his position in the eyes of the suspected parties. Three of them on horseback showed up a t our place one day. They called Pa out and insisted that he come with them. He did not want to go but pretty soon decided that discretion was the better course, went for a horse and rode out with them. My mother feared the worst and of course was terribly worried until he returned a couple of hours later.

He never said much about the affair in the presence of us children, but I did hear him say that they were trying to find out who had been doing the talking and what had been said. Ma, of course, wanted to know what he told them and he said, "Oh, nothing much, I didn't know anything." "Well, what did they do?" Ma asked. "They didn't do anything" he replied, "just talked, said they had to find out some things." All very matter-of-factly stated though I suspect he had been more worried than he ever let any of us know.

Threats of the suspected horse thieves did not serve to stop the talk and impromptu investigations by the injured parties, and gradually it began to come to light that our much respected citizen and erstwhile Sunday School superintendent, John Burch, not only was mixed up in the matter but actually was the leader of the gang. He finally deci ded things were getting too hot and sometime during the winter he suddenly disappeared. At about the same time all the others un der suspicion did likewise.

No one knew what had become of them and gradually the furor died down, but during the summer we began to get the rest of the story. At first, the reports were the barest rumors, but gradually they came, by repi tition if nothing more, to be well authenticated and completely accredited by the whole settlement.

It seems that the Burch gang, as we had come to refer to them, had all gone to Texas to hole up while the heat was on. And to occupy themselves and keep their hands in, had engaged in a well organized and successful business of cattle rustling. Their system was to take only a few at a time and from ranches over a wide area, driving them to a secret rendezvous, rebranding them and feeding them through the winter in preparation for a dr ive north to the railheads in Kansas as soon as the grass was out in the spring.

By time for the drive, the thieves had assembled a fine herd; they started as early as possible and the drive progressed well for some time. But the Texas cattle men had not been idle. Reports of thefts had been assembled from widely scattered points, the evidence sifted and collated until the cattlemen were assured of their ground and knew where to find the culprits. Officers and ranchmen together took off on the trail of the slow moving herd and somewhere near the middle of Indian Territory caught up with it. A pitched battle resulted in which John Burch and most of his Men were killed. The few who escaped did not show up again in their old haunts and none of us ever heard of them again. So ended another episode of the frontier.

It was events such as these that finally led to the forming of the vigilance committee. This type of law enforcement was resorted to frequently throughout the West with the hope that a little rough justice would reduce crime

While the times seemed to require such action, this was always a poor way to administer justice and wholly illegal itself. Judgment and punishment was meted out without due process and often unfairly, and it was an unsafe way to o operate because, generally, a goodly number of the lawless element, against whom the action was directed, were vigilantes themselves. They sat in on committee meetings, listened to and helped to develop p lans and, of course, passed on all pertinent information to their friends.

My father was inclined to a policy of "live and let live" and he never took kindly to the vigilantes, but some one finally persuaded him that he owed to the community to join them. He went to some meetings, b ut I knew of only one time when he went out with them for action. Some stealing had been going on and some vigilante thought he knew a fellow who had knowledge of the crimes. They called on the man and took him out for questioning, he said he knew nothing and stuck to it. The vigilantes threatened him with everything up to and including hanging, put a rope around his neck and over the limb of a tree, told him to talk or hang. But he persisted and they finally let him go.

My father wasn't very pleased with the proceedings and avoided any further service with the vigilantes. I do not even know whether or not this vigilance committee did hang anyone, but many a man along the border, whether guilty or not, was left swinging from a tree limb by such committees.

Chapter lV

Belmont

We were happy in H oward County in spite of the rough aspects of our lives. At least, we children were. Innocent as we were of the problems of making a living, having known little better, we were satisfied with a warm fire in the winter and full stomachs the year around. I thinks the folks were happy too except for one thing.

Howard County was still the frontier, but it had never been just the kind of c ountry for which my father had been searching. We had been almost destitute upon arrival there and he had worked hard to build up a small backlog of resources, but I believe he must have had in mind from the beginning that it was all building toward the time when we could move on. This was timber country and rugged, if not nountainous terrane. His dream was of the open plains. While his home in Illinois had been in the timber country, he had hunted the southern Illinois prairies as long as he could remember, and he had traversed the greater and wilder plains of the west on his trip to California. It was inevitable that we should look further for that spot into which permanent roots could be put down with confidence.

During our second summer in Kansas, a roving preacher of the Disciple Church (we called them Campbellites in those days) came to St. Paul to hold a revival meeting. We went to some of the meetings and, as was customary with everyo ne, asked the preacher to eat with us. He became enthusiastic about the country and about our place and decided he wanted to move down there. He had a piece of property in Woodson County and proposed to my father that they trade. I have always been a little mystified at the preacher's reasons, and more so at my father's interest, because Woodson County definitely was not "the place"- not even so much so as where we were.

In the first place, it was a step back. Woodson Co. was still pretty much undeveloped but had been settled much longer and in no sense was the answer to my father's dream. Perhaps two years of hewing a living and raisin g a family in the wilderness had had a sobering iffect on him. Or perhaps the effect was on my mother. Perhaps they felt the need for a rest.

At any rate, the preacher talked Pa into a trip back there to look over the proposition and some sort of trade was worked out. That fall we were again on the road in a covered wagon on the way to a new home.

Our place adjoined the little town of Belmont. Actually, I guess it <u>was</u> Belmont. There was a farm, I don't even know how big it was, and a big white two-story house. The post office occupied one room of the house and my father was postmaster. I think that went with the

trade; I am not sure why a stranger in town should be postmaster, it could have been only through ownership of the postoffice. Be that as it may, he served in that capacity throughout our stay there.

The house had about ten rooms and seemed a palace to us, fresh from a one room cabin with earthen floor. It served, too, as a sort of makeshift wayside inn where the few travelers, passing that way, could eat and sleep now and then. The rest of the town consisted of a general store, a blacksmith shop and a few smaller houses scattered about. All around were timbered hills, much as we had been accustomed to but probably less suited to agricultural development, and the hills were still filled with wild game.

One day some one dashed into the postoffice and excitedly reported that a bunch of deer had been seen in the woods back of the store. Pa was immediately interested; he grabbed his rifle and was gone. Several other men did likewise. The deer were located all right, two does and a fawn, who found themselves surrounded and dashed first one way and then another searching for a way out.

After a bit, they came too close to a man with a shotgun and the fawn was killed. This was within a hundred yards of the store. The other deer finally broke from the trap and disappeared into the timber. Pa ran home, threw a saddle on his horse and dashed after them. It was long after night before he got home.

After leaving everyone else behind, he made a wide circle until he picked up the tracks of the deer. Dismounting, he led his horse and quietly followed the trail all afternoon as it wandered about through the timber. It was after sundown when he turned up a little draw leading out into the open prairie. Suddenly near the edge of the brush and from under a bank overhung by tall grass, the two deer jumped out. They crossed just one small opening where a clear shot could be had, but that was enough. One of them rode home with Pa that night behin d the saddle.

While the game did not habitually come down into town to be shot, there was plenty of it for those who wanted to go after it. One time later in the winter, we had a snow of several inches which afforded Pa all the excuse he needed to go hunting. Again he was out until after dark. He reported two deer seen, two shots fired, and two fresh venison hung in trees. It was a thrill no small boy could forget, to be allowed to go with him the next morning in the wagon to bring in the game.

But there was not much interest for us living in town small though it was. W e missed our little world all our own. It was not that we did not like people, I think it was

that we liked peace more. There was no law here any more than had been the case in Howard County. Where people assemble without law there seems always to be a minority which does not want peace. As an example, there was the time when a drunk tried to get himself killed at our barnyard gate.

There had been a lot of people in the village that afternoon, and considerable disturbance. Someone came over from the store and reported a bunch of fellows having a game over there and getting drunker and louder as the day wore on. Pa asked what they were using for whiskey, "Vinegar Bitters" was the reply. This was a widely publicized patent medicine of the day; little medicint but considerable alcohol. More useful for getting drunk then for anything else.

After a while one man passed out. I guess this broke up the party because another crazy drunk soon staggered from the store into the street yelling and putting on a great show for the curious idlers. He finally managed to get his horse loose from the raxk and some one helped him up and headed him north out of town. He whipped the horse with his hat and got him into a lope and everone thought we were rid of him. But pretty soon he was back, yelling as loud as he could and his horse in a dead run. He came through town, passed our house and headed directly for our barnyard gate. The horse, however, still had his eits about him and stopped suddenly, just before colliding therewith. Not so the rider. He continued on over his horse's head and into the gate with a crash.

His yelling stopped but the crowd's began. Women screamed that he was killed but unfortunately this was not the case. Some of the men helped him up and when he got his breath back, he was as loud as ever. It took an other hour or more to get him out of town.

I suspect my father pondered on such as this and wondered if there wasn't a better place for him to raise a family.

Eighteen seventy four was the year of the great grasshopper scourge in Western Kansas. They came in swarms that could have been numbered only in b illions. As in the legend of locusts in Egypt, they swep t across the land eating every green thing that lay in their path. In all the scattered settlements where crops had been planted (corn, feed and gardens) every growing thing was literally and totally devoured. The native grasses of the plains were eaten into the ground.

A cloud would appear on the horizon. Later we learned to recognize a grasshopper cloud because it would send out long streamers ahead and upward. Perhaps these were columns of scouts sent out to locate the juicier fields. But juicy or not, all things fell before the devastating horde; all

plant life disappeared without appreciable satiation of it's appetite.

As the cloud approached the light of the sun would be blocked out as at twilight and the air became filled with the deafening roar of countless wings. While passing over, apparently with no stopping or lessening of its density, millions of the numberless host would have dropped out of the cloud to devour their bit of the puny product of man and nature below then take their places again in the ever moving caravan.

Wind and ewather would take their toll of the passing scourge and I have heard settlers who went through it say they had seen drifts of dead hoppers two feet deep piled against the windward side of barns and houses. I, in the later and lesser invasions, notably in '76, have seen wagon tires roll up dripping as they passed over and crushed out the lives of countless thousands of these creatures.

People of the plains region were left stranded and in complete destitution. Western Kansas, to all intents and purposes, was left to the Indians and buffalo that winter as nearly all the settlers were forced to go east to winter with friends or relatives and acquire, by whatever means they could, the where-with-wll to tide them over until another year's crop could be produced. Among these was John Walcher.

He was a nephew of my mother. He had gone out from Illinois a year before and taken up a claim in Sumner County some forty miles south of Wichita. He was caught squarely in the sweep of the grasshoppers and everything he had was wiped out. So in the late summer, he loaded his family in a covered wagon and headed east to Belmont to spend the winter with us. There was his wife, Cora and two small children, Albert and Hattie. There was another born soon after their arrival but due, in part at least, to their hardships and the impossibility of proper care, it was dead.

I think the relatives were discovering that we had a big house. John and his family had been with us only a short while when trouble arose from another source. A brother of my mother, Henry by name, a minister of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, had been living and preaching in western Missouri. Two or three years before he had died suddenly leaving a widow and five small boys, and little in the way of support. They had drifted back to the family in Illinois butnothing had developed for them there and now they were without funds and with no place to go. Why they turned to us I do not know. Certainly we had nothing to offer them but hospitality, but for some reason Aunt Lucretia de-

termined to head west and the arrangements were made for them to spend the winter with us.

My father took his wagon and team and went over into Missouri to meet them and bring them home. Someone from the old neighborhood in Illinois had brought them part way. The caln was gathering, and the big house was bulging. I marvel that we got through the winter but we did, and the boys who were old enough all went to a little school there in the bush about a mile from our village.

John Walcher seems not to have become discouraged by the grasshopper experience and planned to go back to his Sumner County claim in the spring. There was unoccupied land there to be had for the taking and a dollar and a quarter an acre due and payable before the claim could be proved up. Moreover, this was the plains and the frontier. My father's eyes glowed as the folks would sit around the fire in the evenings and discuss it. Perhaps this was what he had been seeking for so long. Perhaps in Sumner County lay our "hundred and sixty acres."

They went out there during the winter, J ohn Walcher and Pa. Pa just had to see it. He evidently liked what he saw because he filed on the quarter section adjoining John's place on the east and came home determined to move out there in the spring, 1875. He sold out our property and all were busy with preparations for departure.

But our immediate family, as well as our relatives, was to experience it's troubles before we could leave Belmont.

One day, late in the winter, Pa took the wagon to a place we had leased down by the school house to get a load of feed. Big Al (A.M.B,) Walcher went with him. We had two Albert Walchers with us now. One was John's boy about Hank's age and the other was Aunt Lucretia's oldest boy, A.M.B. Walcher born 1861. I guess he was about fourteen then or about five years older than I. He was already his mother's right arm and a real man in his household. The two Alberts having been brought together at our place, something had to be done to distinguish them, so they became and so remained, Big Al and Little Al, based upon their ages.

From the time he left the Army after the War between the States, I do not believe my father ever carried a gun for his own protection. This was rather unusual on the frontier where the six-gun was the only law, but he felt that a man lived by his own law and created his own enemies. A gun, far from being a badge of honor, for most people was more nearly a symbol of fear. At best it was indicative of a search for trouble and trouble was easy to find for those who sought it. But carrying a shot gun or rifle in the

anticipation of providing meat for the table--that was another matter. Picking up a gun when he went out was almost like putting on his hat.

So, on this occasion, his shot gun went along. Having loaded the wagon, Pa and Big Al climbed into the seat. As he did so, Pa picked up the gun from where it lay against the seat, slid under it and sat down. The gun dropped into place across his right leg as always with the muzzle projecting back under his right arm. But this time two things went wrong. The gun had slipped down so that the muzzle did not project far enough, and it went off. He never knew why. The shot tore across his ribs making a wound six inches or more in length and took out a chunk off the inside of his arm as well. The burning powder set his clothes afire and he was badly burned before it could be put out. The burning had the beneficial effect of stopping the bleeding and sterilizing the wound.

Al yelled and jumped from the wagon but Pa called him back and after the immediate excitement was over, they got the team headed toward home. Pa walked into the house trying to put up a bold front for my mother's sake but he was hardly equal to the occasion. Pretty soon he had to collapse on the bed and allow his shirt to be removed and his wound attended.

Aside from the seriousness of this incident to him personally, it was also a great handicap in the preparations for leaving Belmont and on the trip itself. Nevertheless, in about a month we set forth, the Hefley an d John Walcher families and U.S., one of Aunt Lucretia's boys. She and the rest of her family were to come on later after we had made some preparations for them on our new neighborhood. We had two wagons and eight head of milk cows, a nice herd we had built up in Belmont. U.S. came along to help with the cows. It was to be our job to walk alternately behind the herd and keep them moving. While one or two of the leaders could be tied to the rear wagon, the others would not always follow without prodding.

My father was not nearly recovered from his wound as yet, so the trials he and John Walcher had on the trail, taking care of two women, a baby (my brother, John, 1874, was less than a year old) and seven other small children as well as the cows and teams, can well be imagined. A part of the way lay through the Flint Hills where the roads were fierce and the progress extremely slow. There were some scattered settlements along the way but no accommodations for travelers.

I will relate one incident of the trip which made things rather worse than better. We camped one evening near

a settler's cabin and received permission to put our cows in the barn lot, but someone failed to latch a gate properly and the next morning they were all out and gone. It was in a hilly, timbered area and it took three days with all hands working, including our hosts, to round them all up.

One day while this was in progress, some of the smaller children got to playing in the farmer's buggy parked by the house. Orana was not yet three and Hank and Hattie were only about five. It was decided that the latter two would pull and take Orana for a ride. They could not have gone far except that the buggy was on a considerable slope and when each picked up a shaft it practically moved off by itself It gathered momentum rapidly, the kids were all screaming and Orana thought she was being killed. The women saw it from the camp and, adding their screams to the din, took out after the buggy, sure, too, that everyone was being killed. But the buggy wound up in the creek at the bottom of the hill without even turning over and with only a broken shaft. The only other injuries were to Pa's disposition and pocket book when he had to settle for the damage.

But what mattered tribulation; Pa was heading for that hundred and sixty acres, and I - ah yes; I at last was really "crossing the plains."

Chapter V

The Plains

To the best of my knowledge, there is no place in the great plains area today where one can get the effect of the prairie as it existed in 1875. We cannot now view the unbroken expanses and become victims of the witchery of the broad open country. Man's civilization has filled this once enchanted world with houses, with trees and shrubs, with roads and concrete highways, towns and cities, railroads, water towers and grain elevators. As the Indian and buffalo have departed from the prairie, so the prairie itself, as they knew it and as we first saw it, has departed from our land.

We felt that enchantment immediately. We arrived at our trail's end in early April, 1875. The spring grass had just begun to cover with a beautiful carpet of green the black and seemingly barren ground left by the grasshoppers the year before. We rested a few days with the John Walchers whose house was found just as they had left it. But it was small even for their little family and we found another less than a mile away where we could stay. It was known as the Glen House and, like all the others, had been deserted the summer before. It's owners had not yet returned and no agent could be located, so we just moved in under squatter's rights.

We stayed there only a month while my father was making more permanent arrangements. I think, though I little realized it then, that in that month I fell incurably in love with the prairie, the wild, and the west. The house stood out in the flat open plain, a carpet of green wherever you looked, but not all green either-flowers, too, everwhere. Not just a few, but literally hundreds of acres of them; white and blue annemone, dogtooth violets, johnnie jump-ups; millions of flowers, white and yellow and indigo. Oh, the beauty of the mornings and so far away. Such a feeling of bigness and freedom. Then the stars at night, so many, so bright and so near. And the night breezes always singing-singing songs of the plains with crickets and katydids keeping the time and putting words of life into the music. In such freedom, a boy could shout and never grow tired, could sing out loud all the songs he knew and the earth and sky would receive it all with wondorous applause. It seemed paradise, indeed;

Those early years in Sumner County were hard and much of our experience was commonplace to be sure. My purpose here is to sketch some few incidents and impressions that have stayed with me through the years and which are indicative of life and times and places along the frontier.

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Our nearest Post Office was South Haven, five miles southeast of our place, but Wellington was the County Seat

and somewhat larger. It was about ten miles north and a little east. Both had been established only two or three years before and neither was much more than a country trading center. The railroads had not yet come closer than Wichita, so those little towns did not even serve as marketing points for the settler's crops.

There was for years, a famous landmark on the road to Wellington. Only a half mile or so from town was Slate Creek and near where the trail crossed the creek stood a large elm tree. About fifteen feet up a large, almost horizontal limb, projected toward the road. More correctly stated, this tree was an "infamous" landmark, because it marked the executions, by mob violence, of three alleged horse thieves. They had been taken from the jail in town one night and hanged from the limb of this tree, feing left for officers to cut down the next morning. This had happened only a year or so before our arrival and to my knowledge, it was the last such case in the vicinity. But the incident was still fresh in everyone's memory and the tree and it's story held a great fascination for my young mind as I lived again the excitement and horror of the scene each time I passed.

Lest such stories should leave a false impression, as has been the case with so much of the writings about our western frontier, I hasten to add that they do not represent the prevailing standard of conduct for those who lived there. Rather they stood out by virtue of their departure from the norm. Horse stealing, cattle rustling, shootings and mob violence actually were isolated incidents remembered for the infrequent excitement they brought to a community. For the most part, the settlers were peace loving, well meaning people with a healthy respect for the rights of a neighbor and a cheerful willingness to help him attain and maintain those rights. As a boy, I roamed the country freely and without fear with other boys and alone, with never a thought that anyone could wish me harm.

We found a somewhat more improved farm with a better house into which we could move and get settled there for ab out a year while Pa was getting our own place started. The season was a good one for crops as if to compensate for the grasshoppers of the uear before 1874. Everything that was planted did well and most of the settlers who had left the previous fall got moved back in. Aunt Lucretia Walcher and her boys came down from Woodson County, 1875, and were able to settle on a partially improved place near us. And this was only the vanguard. Our reports went back to Illinois and several more families came. In two or three years the Blackwelders, the Granthams, the Popplewells, the Ridenours, the Whitakers, several other Walcher families,

and a little later, the Harkeys, all relatives or acquaintances from Montgomery County, moved in to increase our group. In time the whole community came to be known as the Illinois neighborhood.

There are a few things from that first year that have always stood out in my memory, the significanse of which have grown on me as I have grown wiser. One of these was the piles of bones to be found everywhere one might go across the broad prairies.

The last buffalo in Sumner County was killed only the year before. Probably an aged bull force from the herd over which he had once ruled supreme. He had drifted in from no one knows where and was found wandering as a lost soul, among the settlements of the invaders and dispoilers of his vast domain. And, as is the way with dispoi lers, they had hunted him down and destroyed him, the last symbol of a vanished era.

But before them had come many others without even the redeeming quality of a desire to occupy and utilize his land. They had decimated his mighty race for the skin he wore, leaving thousands of tons of fresh meat where it fell, to be devoured by wolves and carnivouous birds. To a thinking mind could there be wonder at the bitter hatred for the white man of the plains Indian as he was compelled to watch his principle supply of food and shelter disappear.

Now all that was left were the piles of white bones, picked by the scavengers of the prairie, cleaned and bleached by the winds and rain and the summer sun. And thousands of horns, each pair designating the last stand of a patriarch of the plains who had died indefence of his own. I have counted as many as fifty-three skeletons around a single shooting stand; mute but forceful testimony to the distructive power of a good rifleman well hidden with a good gun, when a herd of these noble animals came within his range.

But the great buffalo was not yet through with what, only a few short years before, had seemed to be his boundless beneficence for manking. The settlers found that even his bones had a market now and many a family pulled through the lean years with the aid of the cash income the represented. Dealers in bones and horns bought all that could be brought in, shipping them east where they were ground into meal for fertilizers. In a very few years, they were all gone. Often my father would take us out around the countryside to gather a wagon load of bones when we needed a quick dollar; though he never made a business of it as did some of his contemporaries. On one occasion, however, I huess he was pretty short of funds; he rigged up the wagon with double sideboards and a three horse team and went down into the Cherokee Strip for a real load. That one netted about

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There are a few things from that first year that have always stood out in my memory, the significance of which have grown on me as I have grown wiser. One of these was the piles of bones to be found everywhere one might go across the broad prairies.

The last buffalo in Bunker County was killed only the year before. Probably an aged bull force from the herd over which he had once ruled supreme. He had drifted in from no one knows where and was found wandering as a lost soul, among the settlements of the invaders and dispoilers of his vast domain. And, as is the way with dispoil lers, they had hunted him down and destroyed him, the last symbol of a vanished era.

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Now all that was left were the piles of white bones, picked by the scavengers of the prairie, cleaned and bleached by the winds and rain and the summer sun. And thousands of horse, each pair-designating the last stand of a petticoat of the plains who had died indefence of his own. I have counted as many as fifty-three skeletons around a single shooting stand; quite but forceful testimony to the distructive power of a good rifleman well ridden with a good gun, when a herd of these noble animals come within his range.

But the great buffalo was not yet through with what, only a few short years before, had seemed to be his boundless beneficence for mankind. The settlers found that even his bones had a market now and many a family pulled through the lean years with the aid of the cash income the depressed. Dealers in bones and horns bought all that could be brought in, shipping them east where they were ground into meal for fertilizers. In a very few years, they were all gone. Often my father would take us out around the countryside to gather a wagon load of bones when we needed a quick dollar; though he never made a business of it as did some of his contemporaries. On one occasion, however, I guess he was pretty short of funds; he rigged up the wagon with double sideboards and a three horse team and went down into the Cherokee Strip for a real load. That one netted about

thirty-five hundred pounds.

Thus, the slaughtered buffalo, years after he was gone, helped to feed the poineer in his struggle to possess the West.

The prairie chicken, too, has a story. These beautiful game birds were here by the thousands. Flocks of them, twenty-five to a hundred, would swarm into every little corn patch of an evening looking for food. And the peculiar crowing of the male birds made music everywhere each morning about sunrise. They were not very wild and could be easily killed with a gun or caught in simple traps..Their flesh was excellent and much in demand for table use. So, like the buffalo, they were rather wantonly destroyed. However, they reproduced rapidly and it was not so much the Killing of them, but the destruction of their nesting grounds that cut so markedly into their numbers. Their eyys were laid everywhere in the tall grasses of the prairie and as these were plowed and converted to cultivation, the eggs were destroyed, as well as the potential for the production of more. They were not a species which took kindly to a civilized area, anddas civilization marched on, they had to go.

Migratory birds, too, were interesting and plentiful in this now frontier. In passing twice a year, south in fall north in spring. Each type brought it's own thrill and imparted it's own bit of magic to this magic land. Every sort of waterfowl went over us. The honking of gaese, the quacking of ducks, the piping of cranes filled the air almost constantly for days and nights on end when a flight was on. And they were good forecasters for us of the kind of weather we should expect.

There were millions of land birds, too; a dozen varieties of snipes and thousands of gulls. Blackbirds of several kinds and in swarms that must have numbered millions. All the common song birds drifted by in season. There was little ground cover for the birds and for most of them, their stay with us was short. But their ever coming and going, kept us always reminded of the constant coming and going of life and time; from where to where we could little know and but poorly guess.

With all these things in the background, is it to be wondered at that I fondly remember my home on the plains? Some years ago, and many many years after the events depicted here, I set down my feelings, thus:

> Take me back to the home of my youth on the plains,
> Where the wind and the light seemed to blend
> In a wonderful song of the brave and the free,
> And the charm of the wild knew no end.

Where the tall prairie grass rose and fell in the breeze,
Like the waves on a billowy sea,
Where the hawk circled high all the day in the sky
And the wolf's howl made wild melody.

Oh, my far away home on the plains
Had a charm I can never forget;
Tho' I have wandered afar through this wide world of change.
That charm of the wild holds me yet.

So I want to go back where my childhood was spent,
Where the prairie mirage made me dream
Of a great wonder-world that I longed to explore,
And the rainbows of youth shed their gleam.

I've seen beauty enough, known earth's joys and delights;
With it's wild, simple life, and it's matchless expanse
Holds my heartstrings wherever I roam.

Chapter Vl

A New Farm Has It's Problems

There was a basic similarity to frontier life everywhere. But time and place made a difference in detail, and this detail often involved the fundemental requirements for existence. Actually, frontier life became almost a matter of essential needs and the struggle to keep them supplied. Perhaps these essentials can be boiled down to five words-food, water, clothing, shelter and fuel. In the rolling timbered country, we had known elsewhere in Kansas, there had been about as much wild game as here and a better opportunity for growing and caring for livestock. There had been a much better supply of wild fruits and vegetables. There had been water in the spring on the hillside or in the clear, dancing stream of the forest.

For shelter, a cave in the rocks and trees everywhere from which to build a cabin. As for fuel, it was at hand. On the wide prairie--quite different. Clothing was a similar problem anywhere, but food was scarce and hard to get. Some water in the streams but not close enough at hand for most, and wells were needed on all farms. Water was fairly deep and often of doubtful quality, being contaminated by gypsum deposits. Shelter--none at all. Fuel almost as bad, though there was enough brush in the creek bottoms for emergencies. There actually was coal in Kansas but no way to get it but to haul it from Wichita, and none of the farmers had money to buy it anyway.

We met all these problems in Sumner County. For a couple of years, we rented farms that had some sort of living quarters. It took a good while to get things in shape on our own place and there were some whom the grasshoppers had driven out who did not get back for a year or two, if al all. The houses were small and rough but they kept the weather out. Water came from a rain barrel and when that ran out, which was often, it had to be hauled a mile or more from a neighbor's or a creek. Food and clothing were at a minimum for along time and most of our fuel was wood hauled from Indian Territory, at a distance of fifteen to thirty miles. Under such conditions, the development of a community is necessarily slow. And with transportation what it was, seventy-five years ago, much slower than it would be now.

Houses were built in different ways but all very cheaply. Those who had a little money had rough lumber shipped in and a goodly number of the homesteads had small rough cabins, an occasional one a really good frame house. Many built houses of the prairie sod and others only dugouts set back into a creek bank and slmost entirely under ground but for the front wall and earth roof.

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The native grass made a smooth, thick growth above ground, and below the multitudinous roots through untold years of reproduction had become as dense as the soil could hold.

A "sod bustin" plow out this root system and the earth about two inches below the surface and laid it over in strips about twelve inches wide. By cutting these strips with a sharp spade into pieces about two feet long, a quite tough building material was available. These blocks of sod resembled adobe brick and were laid up into a wall in much the same manner. Joints were mostly dry but the outside edges were chinked with mud where it looked like the weather might get through. The resultant structure was ha rdly as durable as adibe, but the material was easily obtained and actually a good sod house would stand for several years.

Since we had no money for a good house and since, arrangements having been made for temporary quarters, there was no great haste to move on to our own farm, my father worked out the housing problem a little differently. With an eye to the future when we might have a real house, he decided to build a half-sunken affair which would eventually become a basement. In hauling firewood from the Territory, he would bring back a log or two at a trip until he had accumulated a couple dozen or so. These he hewed on opposit sides making flat surfaces as smooth and straight as his tools and a reasonable patience would permit. He then dug a hole about five feet deep and walled it up with stone. This, too, had to be hauled a considerable diatance. We quarried it ourselves from a deposit ten or twelve miles away. He struggled with the stone work a good while by himself but it went awfully slow. All this, of course, while carrying on the normal business of farming. Finally he found a man professing a degree of skill as a mason and put him to work to get the job finished. The stone was laid in a mud mortar with deeply scored joints on the face side after which the whole was surfaced with a lime plaster.

On top of this stone basement, the logs were laid to extend the walls three or four feet above the ground. A large ridge pole was laid across the center, east and west, with a lighter pole framework for rafters. The whole was then covered with a thick layer of grass and lastly with earth. There was a window high up under the eves on morth and south and an entrance at the east. He managed enough lumber to put in a floor, to build steps down into it, and to build a door. This latter was laid on a slope like that of a storm cellar.

The whole was about sixteen feet square inside. It was a primitive shelter but it was shelter, and we lived in it for several years. In time we built a three room frame house over it.

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most sacrilege to omit Bobby. His feelings would have been hurt, but more than that the many many others in the community who believed in him, would have looked upon us as being more than a little queer.

For you see, Bobby was a "diviner". Possibly a more common term, but one less dignified and complimentary, is "water witch." He could tell anyone exactly the best place to get water and the depth they would have to go. He could also locate iron, copper, coal and gold. I have no doubt that had he known of the oil reservoirs that underlay much of our southwestern country, he could have located them also.

The Summervilles came into the country a year or two after we did and bought a small farm. They were then about sixty-five and not particularily robust. But Bobby would work, and did, for many of the neighboring farmers. He was a sort of Jack of all trades, a good worker, and absolutely honest and sincere. I even thought then, and still do, I guess, that he was sincere in his belief that he knew how to locate things below ground.

To do this "divinin'", he had to have a forked switch about eighteen inches long from a peach tree. It had to be peach, there was just something about peach. He would grasp the two small ends in his hands, holding his arms straight down in front of him with the fork up and lying against his body. He would then walk slowly around over a prospective site and when he came over the water, the fork would, of it's own accord, twist forward and down to point to it. This, then, was the place to dig. Having determined this, he would sit down there, hold the switch out in front of him, again with the two tips in his hands but this time with one hand directly above the other and the fork pointing out horizontally. Pretty soon, after he and the "divinin'" rod were properly situated and still, the outer end would begin to bob up and down slowly. He would count the bobs and the total represented the number of feet down to the water.

I do not know how much faith I had in all this at the time, but I know Pa had none. However, he let Bobby come over and go through the ritual and reach his decision. Actually, he arrived at about the point Pa intended to put the well anyway, and it was eventually dug just about where he indicated it should be. And sure enough, we got water within about three feet of where he said it would be.

The truth was that there was a layer of sheet water underlying the whole country. There had been enough wells dug around us by that time that anyone studying the situation could easily ascertain the slope of the strata bearing it.

The surface, except for creek beds, was almost level and it was no complicated thing to figure within a small degree of error, the distance down to the water at any given point.

So we dug our well. Pa walled it up with stone all the way, dry laid, and it turned out to have fine soft water. In fact, some of our neighbors who had become accustomed to the gyp water so many of them had to use said they didn't like the taste, it was too much like rain water.

Bobby needed a little more help to find minerals. He had a little charm bag, a different one for each material, which he hung on the end of the "divinin" rod. Some of the boys swiped a bag one day to see just what he had in it. I guess they didn't learn much except that it did contain something. Some little pieces of metal and rocks, they couldn't tell what they were.

He found a large deposit of coal on John Walcher's place (Laura McLain's place) adjoining us on the west. As badly as we all needed fuel, that was a mery important discovery. The trouble was, it was some distance down and John hadn't the faith to help him dig. No one else had either, at least not enough to discover the fortune on property belonging to someone else. So Bobbie never did prove he found coal. He did do some digging on his own but never got down to the deposit. Neither has anyone else.

And he found gold in numerous places. But people's lack of faith was very discouraging to Bobby. The property owners never would consent to dig long enough to become rich.

It was essential that we get in crops the first year in order to live. This was wheat country, or so everyone had decided, but wheat did not do well on the turned sod the first year. It needed a well broken and cultivated soil, and thus, many farmers became discouraged with the country before their lands had ever become properly prepared for raising the crop for which they actually were best suited. Another important element in discouragement was the lack of tools for wheat farming. There were no planters or threshers in the coun try and no money for their purchase. So wheat farming developed slowly.

In addition to that, wheat had to be planted in the fall. Having arrived in April, we could have no crop until the following year. But Pa was able to get in about eighty acres that fall on rented land. This was on the Lingenfelter place and we were able to move into the house there that winter.

Gardening, too, was not well suited to the newly broken sod. Gardening really was the backbone of the frontier economy and those settlers who had come first two or three

years before, must have had it hard indeed. We were able to utilize ground already mellowed by two or three years of cultivation and thus did very well. Meanwhile Pa selected a little flat down by the creek on our own place as our garden spot for the future and got it broken that summer. He was also breaking other ground on the place whenever he could find the time, as well as breaking ground on the rented places as partial payment for our occupancy.

But there were other crops which did do well on new sod. The fretility was there, the only drawback was the difficulty of preparation. The prairie grass, when properly cut and turned over, completely and immediately died. The dense root mass largely decayed the first year, providing a wonderfully rich source of plant food. And moisture was retained in the soil, so that no matter how dry the season, there was enough to support ample plant growth

The season of 1875 was a splendid one for crops in general. We hand planted corn that first year on the newly turned sod by chopping slits with an axe and dropping in the grains of seed. It produced amazingly without cultivation. Later we got a hand operated corn planter. This was a devise similar to a post-hole digger on a miniature scale, with a can on the side to hold the seed corn. As the levers were operated in and out, a plunger went into the can to pick up two or three grains and dropped them into the hole it had opened in the ground. This was some better than hand planting. It was years before we were able to get a mechanical planter.

Watermelons, cataloupe, pumpkins, squash, piemelons and citrons, planted similarly, all grew like weeds. We hauled them in by wagon loads, piled the surplus by the cor lot fence, and fed it to the stock until mid-winter.

My father was quick to get an orchard started too. It lay south of and next to the road and just east of the house. It got off to a fine start for two or three years but took a bad beating from a hail storm one spring. Hail was an ever-present threat to young crops and often did extensive damage to wheat and corn. This one came in the spring, too early to hurt most growing things. But in violence and size of stones, it was the worst we ever had. Great patches of bark and most of the leaves were stripped from the young trees. And for miles around practically every window on the north and west sides of the houses were broken. There were cases where a lower sash had been left raised inside of the ipper one, but the wind-driven hail as big as hen eggs, shattered through the two as easily as one. Our north window was saved because it was so high up under the overhanging eve.

Pa was in the field plowing. He was caught by the full force of the storm with no shelter in reach. The horses became frightened and unmanageable and he could only unhook them from the plow and let them go. They wound up in a tangle of harness and saplings in the orchard, unable to run further from the storm but just as well off as though they had. I rescued them later, not materially the worse for the experience. But not so Pa.

He charged up to the door pounding for admittance. We, of course, had it closed and latched against the storm. But we let him in as hurriedly as possible. Blood was streaming down his face and from the back of his right hand--he looked pretty awful. The head injury was a nasty gash, but turned out to be fairly minor compared to that on the hand. This, also, was a nasty three-cornered gash, but in addition, the force of the blow had bruised all the muscles of the hand so that it was many weeks recovering full usefulness.

Fencing was a big problem to the settlers. Many pioneers of our eastern states had used stone or rails for fences but these were not avai lable here. Mr. Glidden's new invention, a wire with barbs on it to discourage stock from touching it, which was destined within a few years to revolutionize the fencing techniques of the entire world, had not yet made it's way into the west. But wheat and corn, even a garden, could not be raised without a means of keeping stock out. I think my father may have been largely responsible for the solution arrived at by most settlers in our section of the country. At least it evolved from his experience an d that of the others who had come out from the old community in Illinois.

As one drives today through southern Kansas, he may wonder at the brushy timber growth around many of the farms. Should he ask as to the meaning, someone would tell him it is hedge rows. But that statement means little to the uninformed, particularly since the hedge is no longer used for it's original purpose and no longer tended and cultivated so that it can perform a useful service. The hedges were put there as fences and well they served. But my, oh my, what a chore to build and maintain.

In Southern Illinois, many farms had been fenced in this way, so my father and the others of the Illinois community had grown up with the hedge rows. Osage Orange was the material more properly, Bois D'Arc. My father sent back to some friend in Illinois for about a peck of seed and planted a little nursery patch on the place, about a third of an acre, rows about two feet apart. The little plants grew there a year, as thick as they could stand in the rows and multiplying constantly from the roots. Then we transplanted the yearling sprouts into rows around the fields, much thinner so as to leave room for multiplyi ng and cultivation. The fence row was a cultivated atrip of ground a rod wide with the hedge in the center, and in our case, we cross fenced in both directions so that the hundred and sixty acres be-

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came four fields of forty acres each. This bare strip was necessary for the growth of the hedge, and other crops would not grow closer than that anyway, but it meant the loss of about six acres or nearly four percent of a farm. But land was cheaper than fencing and in those days of hand operation, a hundred and sixty acres was more than one family could look after.

The bushes were har dy and grew rapidly, yet it was three or four years with the best of care, before a fence could be developed that was really stock tight. The plan was to get them eventually, and keep them, tight enough to turn hogs or sheep. Sometimes, as a temporary measure, during the early growth, they would be made fairly tight against cattle and horses by stretching a single wire more or less at random about three feet above the ground anchored to the taller sprouts. To get the fence really tight required a great deal of careful manipulation. The sprouts were bent over like ribs of a fan with the bottom one almost on the ground. If they could not be laced with branches of the adjacent bush so as to stay put, they were cut slightly on the upper side at the base. From the limbs thus bent over, new foliage grew vertically so that a dense, interlocking lattice work eventually developed.

Here and there a bush or a short section of them, would constantly be dying out for some reason and would have to be replaced. And the fence required annual trimming and frequent cultivation if it was to serve it's purpose. I didn't keep a record of it, but I suspect several years of my life were devoted to hedge rows. I must have done my work well, some of them are growing there yet after three quarters of a century.

Hedge row, aside from their primary purpose as fences, were both a good and an evil. They broke up the oneness of the wide, flat prairie. This I did not like, but others, who felt a monotony in the open plains, did. They helped as windbreaks and served as shelter for small game and songbirds. When kept clean, the cultivated ground was a good break against the ever present threat of the prairie fire. But more often than not, the worst fire season, late summer, found them choked with grass and piled high with drifts of tumble week, making their presence a fire hazard rather than a guard. And in winter, they held snow drifts and piled them up in the roads until sometimes they were impassible for weeks.

Prairie fires were a very resl hazard and an influential part of the frontier. Fiction writers have dramatized them disproportionately, but they did constitute a serious threat to the livelihood, the peace of mind and even the lives of the pioneers. It was many years before the prairies were all broken by the plow, but the wheat fields

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created about as great a hazard as the prairie grass itself. When August and September were very dry, and the hot winds came, the stubble fields being grown up with crab grass, it seemed a fire could start without help from human hands. I n a hard wind, a fire might run for many miles, and even those plants still showing green, were ready to go up in flame along with the rest.

Carelessness, then as now, perhaps was the greatest cause of fire. But incendiarism, like an evil spirit, seems always and everywhere to haunt the dwelling places of men. Prairie fires often arose from a vicious competition in the freighting business. B efore the railroads came, freighting by wagon of all manner of supplies to outlying stations was a tremendous industry, and a lucrative one for those who could master it's problems.

There were two types of freight outfits on the trails, the mule team and the ox team. Cattle could live and work on grass, so long as there was grass, while supplementary feed had to be carried for the mules. This meant a considerable additional expense for the mule freighter. So all through the spring and summer, while the grass was good, the ox outfits had an advantage. But the grass, sooner or later, got dry enough to burn and would "accidentally" be set afire. This just about put the ox teams out of business until another spring. And such "accidents" were frequent. I have seen many fires, starting ten or fifteen miles down in the Territory, burn for several days and run twenty-five miles or more up into the state. No one ever knew how they crossed rivers, creeks and fire guards, but they did. Perhaps across water on drifts of logs and brush; perhaps across plowed fields on tumbling tumble weed. But we often suspected that out among the fire-fighters, supposedly trying to stem the rolling tide of flames, there were those not averse to giving it a boost now and then. Perhaps they just went to sleep. But proof of ill intent was extremely difficult to obtain and the fires swept on/

Much damage was done to pasture land, hay crops, grain left in the field in shock or stack. And sometimes to a house improperly guarded and exposed to the path of the flame. A settler could be wiped out completely in a few hours; few had the reserve to start from scratch again. But as the frontier slowly ceased to be frontier, the fires slackened and stopped. The reasons as shrouded in mystery and conjecture as in earlier years were those for their being.

The grasshoppers were back again our second year. Of course, there were some each year for some time, far more than are usually seen today. They always came down from the northwest and in a few days had disappeared into the southeast, never to return. But their eggs had already been deposited far out on the northern plateaus and their children were ready the following year to succeed them in the grand migration. It was only the gradual breaking up of the nesting grounds by the plow that finally brought the numbers down to controllable

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But that summer of 1876, it must have been early in September, we were treated to a real show. About noon we noti ced the unusual appearande of the sky to the northwest but did not know how to interpret it. For several hours we watched the cloud bank build up and get darker and nearer. The main body lay close to the horizon but all the time there were long arms or spires extending far up into the sky, now reaching high, then drawing down again. The mystery continued most of the afternoon, but the advance guard reached us about an hour before sundown, and we knew. The cry, "Grasshoppers" went up from all sides.

The mass moved on and over us, always rising from somewhere in the rear as others alighted in front. And all moving steadily in the same direction, dictated by some s strange and unerring instinct, toward a goal they knew naught of. The sun went down in a haze as in a heavy fog.

But these billions of hoppers did little damage. They were moving rapidly, not hungry apparently as had been the case two years before. And they came a little late to catch many crops at a susceptible stage. In three or four days, the migration had passed, we at that timehaving no knowledge of whence it had come or whither it might go. These "pest" hoppers as we called them, were a special type and all alike; medium size, red wings and gray backs. Other varieties in small quqntities were with us all summer depositing their eggs, living and dying in a single locality. These migratory hordes must have been driven by the need of food, as their native grass dried up in the semi-arid land of their birth, to seek substance in a more favored clime. Thus, the migration would form and sweep a thousand miles across the plains.

It can well be seen that the farmer's li fe on the plains was a hard life, but for the most part, it was not an unhappy one. Most of the settlers had come west with their eyes open. Miracles were not expected and hardship was the order of the day. The standard of living was low but there were many compensations. Families had come west for freedom and they had that in full measure. No one need be embarrassed by his low station because everyone else shared it with him. Most people were optimistic, life was reasonably safe and serene for all who desired it so, and all public gatherings showed our friends and neighbors to be a happy-go-lucky crowd.

The need we felt, probably more than any other, was that of a market for our produce. Our whole community was more than forty miles from the railroad at Wichita. To haul grain and corn by wagon, those first years, was a time killing and frofit consuming chore and it made farming a

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discouraging thing. There was no way under such conditions to sell lesser crops a t all, so we needed a railroad. It was a necessity, but in some respects an evil one. it meant taxes. And it meant more people, a lot of them undesirable in this new land to which we had come to get away from people. It meant the availability of tools and equipment we sorely needed but could ill afford, and the availability of luxuries which we could not afford at all.

Others wanted the railroads also; notable the cattlemen in Indian Territory and those who drove the trail herds from Texas. Thousands of cattle, fattened in these areas to the south each summer, had to be taken to market through our country. A closer rail head meant a shorter drive, but of greater importance, was the fact that as farms were settled up, the herds could not get through. The cattle came to the state line, but there each year they met more fences, more closed watering places and growing fields. Roads were open to be sure. But where were the stock to be fed and watered and bedded down at night without encroachment on the rights of a settler.

So it was only a few years until the Santa Fe ran a spur line down to Wellington from Wichita, thus vastily improving our marketing facilities. In a few more years, the Rock Island extended down to Caldwell, a little town some fifteen miles southwest of us. This was close to the border on the Chisholm Trail and immediatedly Caldwell became a roaring boom town with the freighting and cattle business. Not to be Outdone, the Santa Fe then went straight south from Wellington to the border and established the town of Hunnewell with great feeding and loading pens for the cattle.

These last extensions did not mean much to the farmer and the towns were not much towns. But there were "border towns" and as such, exerted an influence over the surrounding country far in excess of their importance to it. And that influence was largely bad.

Chapter Vll

Border Towns

Every frontier, since civilization began it's Westward push from the Atlanti c seaboard, has had it's border towns. They were group settlements created not by the primary force which brought men west, but by the necessity of trade or mutual protection. And they contained, as permenent residents, largely those who came to supply secondary services, not those engaged in the basic economy of the area. Some of these services, of course, were necessary, beneficial, and highly commendable. But often the more numerous loquacious and successful of the intrepreneurs were engaged in gambling, the dispensing of liquor, the lifting of a neighbor's cattle or gold, or the operation of a house of ill repute.

Thus, between civilization on the one hand and the great unsettled areas on the other, stood these bulwarks of iniquity, an aid to commerce and thus to the country's development, but at the same time, a retardant to normal settlement through the discouraging and disgusting of good people. They varied much in kind and quality according to time and place and the reason for, and mode of, settlement. The State of Kansas had it's full quota of such towns as It's development was rather slow, beginning some years before, and being intwrrupted by, the War between the States. Contemporary with my boyhood, they were still in existance, and two were close at hand. For years they were real "Border Towns"; a much longer period than was the case with many towns of the mine fields and army posts which have had a more meteoric and perhaps more infamous history.

Hunnewell and Caldwell were primarily for the purpose of bringing the eastern market for beef within the reach of the southwestern plains where it was traditionally, and at that time, more economically produced. The cattle were semi-wild and the desire, almost the demand, of the railroads was for trainload shipments. Thus the vast yards, including wing fences of considerable extent to aid in corraling the great herds, thousands of animals at a time, brought in by the drovers from the south and west. The procedure was generally the same; the herd would be driven near and bedded down for the night, south of the line. About daylight they would be brought up to the yards and loading into cars would begin. Generally, by noon, or perhaps, two o'clock, the job would be finished and the cowboys turned loose on the town for a half holiday. A holiday extending to the next dawn for most of those who did not drink themselves out before then.

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The towns were rough and there were rough men. Caldwell was fifteen miles away and I was not often there, but

I heard plenty about it. People used to insist that they had a dead man for breakfast every morning. This, I never quite believed, but there were numerous shooting affairs and many of them ended in death. The town ma rshall was always a gun-man-himself and what order he kept was done at the end of a loaded forty-five.

We were closer to Hunnewell and our trips to and from the Territory often took us through the place. About half the buildings in town were saloons, and all saloons were gambling houses as well. All women in town for years, were considered to be of the wrong variety; even men in business there, who had families, kept them in Wellington nearly fifteen miles away. The place seemed to observe no lay and generally the peace officer, if one existed at the time, was no place to be found. The town was wide open and stayed so for years. I was only a teenage boy, but the saloons were open to one and all, everybody welcome. Along with other boys, I toured the town on numerous occasions, enamored of it's reputation and curious to see what made it so. And we were seldom disappointed. Drunkenness was everywhere. I often stood in a crowd and watched men playing poker with loaded guns lying on the four corners of the table. And while a dead man was not turned up for breakfast each morning, there was seldom a week-end without a shooting.

Saloon owners, in self-defense, finally adopted a rule that no guns could be worn inside. They were gathered up and hung behind the bar until their owners were ready to depart. And since most men, upon leaving, were under the influence of drink, they were not ordinarily given their guns without a promise that they were on their way home or out of town. One day I observed the working, and the wisdom of this course.

I had wandered into a saloon and stood idly watching a card game when presently a man came in from the street. He was middle-aged, dressed in work clothes, a little rough looking with a couple of days stubble on his face. He walked straight to the bar and asked the bartender to give him his gun.

"Are you taking out for the ranch?" he was asked.

"No," said the fellow, "not right now. But I need my gun pretty bad."

"What for?" asked the man behing the counter.

"I don't think that is any of your d---business," was the reply, "but if you must know, ther's a fellow out there that I've got to kill."

"Nothing Doin'" said the other. And so went the argument for some minutes. The man was perfectly calm and matter of fact about the matter. It was just a job that had to be done and he was in dead earnest about getting

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on with it. It had to be done right now. The man outside was every kind of bad name he could thinkkof but he would not take advantage of hi m, would even let him shoot first, and so on and so on. Just hearing him talk made my hair stand on end. But he lost the argument and his gun stayed on the hook. One shooting was avoided, or, at least delayed.

I stood on a main street corner one day and watched a young couple approachh They appeared to be in their early thirties, both very attractive, the woman especially, being well above the average of personal charm. They were talking loudly, apparently with no interest in who might overhear. They stopped on the corner near me and quite a crowd gathered, because the conversation was quite personal and very entertaining. Everyone was in a high good humor, there being much laughter and clever repartee. The woman did most of the talking. She seemed to be talking about someone whom she disliked, but, on the side, she was soliciting the man who was with her to come to her room. They stood there for fifteen or twenty minutes, during which time, all the vile and filthy language I had ever heard and much that I had not, fell from her lips. If she did not use every vulgar expression in the English language, it was because she had forgotten one or two. No one suggested that she desist and no officer appeared to investigate the crowd. Finally she turned and walked away laughing. I thought then, and a thousand times since, as that revolting scene has flashed through my mind, of the words of one of her sisters in degradation, contained in a famous poem of that day:

> Dealing in shame for a morsel of bread,
> Hating the living, and fearing the dead.
> Merciful God; Have I fallen so low?
> And yet I was once like the beautiful snow.

Another Saturday afternoon- another scene. This one I die not see but got it from those who did. Perhaps I was lucky not to see. I am not sure I could have avoided a protest, and protests in Hunnewell often were terminated suddenly.

A bunch of cowboys were drinking and carousing and having a wonderful time. They picked up a feminine companion somewhere in the course of their tour and she joined in the consumption of spirits. They kept giving her wiskey and she seemed bent on outdrinking them all. But she was not up to it, and a fter a time having exceeded her capacity, passed out. Whether or not this was intenede by her companions, I do not know, but someone thought of a brilliant scheme for taking advantage of it. They took the helpless woman into a pool hall, removed her clothing down to the last unmentionable, and laid the nude body out on a billiard table. There she slept on through the afternoon and evening,

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the cynosure of all eyes, the butt of many lewd remarks and much ribald laughter, and the recipient of much vulgar pawing, while scores of men passed in and out of the place. No one cared, neither for the woman's sake nor that of her sex.

Yet another Saturday afternoon. The town had been celebrating as usual. Three young participants, cowboys, from below the border, had asked for their guns at the saloon where they were in safekeeping. They were given the guns, had last drinks all a round, went out to their horses and rode away down the street. They were gone and no one gave them another thought. But were they gone? Somewhere beyond the edge of town, they decided to turn back and have some fun shooting up the place. So in a few minutes here they came, riding fast, yelling loudly and shooting into every building as they passed. They only shot windows out of most of them. But as they passed the front of the hotel and let loose a heavy volley into the lobby, a young women sitting there was struck by a bullet and instantly killed.

This was a little rough for even the citizenry of Hunnewell, and everyone grabbed guns of whatever sort they could lay hands on and began shooting back. One horse was hit and died on the sidewalk right in the middle of town. His blood was a land mark for some time to come. The rider of the horse was wounded but his pals stopped and picked him up. He was able to keep his seat by locking his arms around the man in front of him and they made it out of town. A posse followed immediately but it took a chase of about fourteen miles into the Territory to get them stopped. The cowboys finally ran out of ammunition and surrendered.

Such was life in the border towns. There were many attempts to establish law and order but all met with terrific opposition from gamblers, rustlers and shady operators of all sorts, who felt they profited from the absence of controls The processof civilizing such places was slow and was hindered greatly sometines by the type of men selected to lead in doing the job. Take for instance, the case of Marshall Brown of Caldwell. Brown was Billy the Kids buddy from New Mexico, Londry Brown.

I do not know where he came from or by what process he became Marshall. But he developed quite a reputation as a fearless officer and even as a ruthless suppresser of lawlessness. He was a fine gun-man, and so far as I know, was never beaten on a draw. He killed several men during his tenure and perhaps had he stayed on, would really have cleaned up the town and gone down in history along side the Erps, Hickocks and Tilgrans of the day. But in a year or two, he resigned and disappeared from Caldwell.

It was only a short time until four men robbed a bank in an adjoining county. A posse went after them and succeeded in arresting them, catching them with the loot. There

seemed incontrovertible evidence of their guilt, and they were promptly lodged in jail. One of the prisoners was ex-Marshall Brown.

An incensed citizenry felt they should expedite the due process of law. People were particularly enraged at Brown because, as an officer, he had been so ruthless a killer of the lawless. So the removed the men forcibly from the jail and took the law into their own hands.

The traditional hanging tree was pretty scarce on the prairie, there being only an occasional creek bottom cottonwood or elm large enough for the purpose. So the mob marched the culprits down the railroad tracks to a trestle not far out of town. Three of the men were duly and successfully dispatched in the customary manner, but Brown seemed to have a particular antipathy for being hung. Not that he became cowardly, he just preferred to die by some other method. So he pled for a chance to run away. Someone counted while he got his start, then everyone opened fire. In a few strides more, he had been hit and fell, dead by the gun as he had lived by it. But he did not have to hang.

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Chapter Vlll

Boys will be Boys

As I recall, the only newspaper we took during our stay in Sumner County was the Toledo Blade. It was a weekly paper but a good one and kept us well informed on things of the outside world. It was our principle reading material aside from textbooks, and we looked forward to it's coming with great inticipation.

For years it's pages carried a serialized story of boyish pranks undre the general title, "Peck's Bad Boy." He was a bad boy all right, at least he could get into more scrapes than anyone else could have in half a dozen life times. Bue we read about him and liked him, and I would not swear we didn't, on occasion, attempt to emulate him.

As boys, we were no worse then most, and neither were many of the others in the neighborhood with which we ran. But boys seem to ha ve a penchant for getting into trouble or for doing foolish things that in restrospect makes one wonder if at that age, he was entirely possessed of his faculties. We had our share of such episodes, brought on generally not by malicious intent, but simply by boyish mis-judgment or over-enthusiasm.

Since our father was a hunting and fishing enthusiast, and since we boys eagerly followed in his footsteps in this regard, it is only natural that many of our foolish and unpredictable stunts should be assiciated with or be the result of those activities.

Hank was only about ten when the bow and arrow craze hit us. I mention him first because he was the one who really developed archery to a pretty fine point. This was a fad that seemed to interest only the boys of our own family. I do not know why some of the others did not take it seriously. I was a pretty good bowman, and, I thought, the best arrow maker in the business. But I also, was already permitted to hunt with a gun so was never quite the enthusiast Hank was. Henry, too, became very good with the bow, but Henry had been a partial paralytic from early childhood and could not participate in most of the active sports the rest of us did.

It started with the advent of the Nez Perce I ndians into our country. They were quartered, temporarily, in the Indian Territory nearby but actually were prisoners of the United States Army following the War with Chief Joseph's bands in '77. Apparently they were not well provisioned and they seemed ill-equipped for making their own livings so far from their traditional homes. But they were allowed considerable freedom to roam the countryside in search of any bit of provender it might provide.

Chapter VIII

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It started with the advent of the Ben Perce I Indians into our country. They were quartered, temporarily, in the Indian Territory nearby but actually were prisoners of the United States Army following the War with Chief Joseph's bands in '77. Apparently they were not well provisioned and they seemed ill-equipped for making their own livings so far from their traditional homes. But they were allowed considerable freedom to roam the countryside in search of any bit of provender it might provide.

I well remember a winter morning when an old brave stalked through our back door and without speech or ceremony, settled himself in front of our kitchen stove to warm. From time to time, he would emit a few grunts and we realized he was trying to ask us something. He could speak English hardly at all, but we finally made out "dead Hog", "dead horse", and realized he was inquiring as to the possibility there might be some dead animal around which he could haul away for food.

Of course, the Indian's eating habits were primitive at best, but their brouble now seemed to be, largely, a matter of starva tion. There was a small slaughter house in Wellington and for a year or two, the Indians would come daily to carry off any and all refuse. An Indian brave often could be seen heading back south with a long string of intestine wrapped around his saddle horn. I heard stories that they rode along chewing on the free end, but I never actually saw that.

But to get back to the bows and arrows. The Indians further sugmented their meager resources by developing such trade items as they could sell to the whites. One of these was bows. They made a small bow, only half size to their real hunting bow, but of excellent wood and manufacture. These could be had in the stores in W ellington and first ones cost, I believe, fifty cents. They were not well finished and we spent hours sanding, varnishing and polishing.

We mostly made our own arrows. Dogwood made the best. It was almost as hard as iron when dry. But dogwood was very heavy and more trouble to process, so we made lots of arrows of skunk brush. The green sticks were heated on the stove to make them pliable and tied tightly into bundles. As they dried, the binding was periodically tightened and after about three weeks, they could be taken out for manufacture, being then quite straight and well cured so that they would stay that way,

When we could, we made the bow strings just as the Indians did, from suitable animal sinew. The front leg of the deer had such a on e. We would split it into several thin strips, twist these a fter the manner of rope, about three strands to the cord, and let it dry. It made a string almost completely devoid of stretch. When this was not available, we got by with a leather thong.

But we could not see the advantage of the Indian arrowhead. We tried it but decided there were too many better substitutes. The stone arrowhead was hard for a boy to fasten into the end of an arrow. Sometimes we used empty pistol cartridges. These would weight the end of an arrow and make it fly quite true without feathers, Hank got to using a spool from sewing thread. This he would cut into

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two pieces and drive one half on to the arrow, flange out. These methods all gave a blunt end which would, of course, penetrate nothing, but which would impart a fatal blow to rodents and small birds. For sharp points, sheet iron, cut with or without barbs, was available and much easier to work than Indian materials.

We came in for considerable razzing from our elders and the other kids, until we proved that our bows were really lethal weapons and not children's toys. One day U.S. Walcher bet Hank he couldn't shoot an arrow through the header barge on the wagon. This was an attachment for loading wheat heads during the harvest and was made of a three-eights inch pine board. The arrow was dogwood without a tip. It did go through and stuck out two or three inches on the other side.

John Walcher's sheep pen was down along the creek between our houses and in winter attracted myriads of snow birds. Hank thought he had quite a hunt when he got thirteen in one day. On another occasion, he strung three of them on an arrow with a single shot.

The bows were excellent for hunting frogs, rats, rabits, any sort of small animals. Hank shot a plover on day but failed to kill him, though the arrow stuck clear through and the bird strode away, arrow tip in the air, looking like a drum major. Arrows were too much trouble in the making to let one be lost. After discovering we could not catch him, Hank ran a quarter of a mile to the house for a shot gun. After chasing the fird all over a quarter section, we finally managed to shoot it, but alas, the arrow had taken two shot and was almost cut in two.

Hank became the undisputed champion the day he killed a rabbit on the run. This took some shootingbut also, a bit of luck, in that it would hardly have been possible without a close and favorable opportunity. There was snow on the ground, making for good visability, and he had already killed one that day on a still shot. The dog scared out another and it cut across the ridge in front of Hank broadside and only twenty-five or thirty feet away. It was almost as important an event to him as the killing of a deer.

We never succeeded in getting a prairie chicken I thought I had one once. The dog set one and I came up to where I had a plain view of him. I cut loose but I guess I was over-confident or something, and did not shoot hard enough. The arrow went home all right, but to my great surprise, it bounced off and the chicken flew away. It had struck high on the back and instead of penetrating just slid across on top of the backbone.

But the climax of our bow and arrow days came when Hank shot Henry in the leg. One of our methods of fishing, par-

ticularly in late summer when the ponds were low, was to get in and churn the mud up from the bottom with our feet. Half a dozen boys could, in a short time, make a sizable pool muddy enough that the fish had to rise to the top for oxygen. Very unsportsmanlike to be sure, but as kids, we were not particularly interested in sportsmanship. And as frontier kids, we definitely were interested in food.

They could sometimes be caught by hand or scooped out onto the bank, but we liked to shoot them with arrows. On this occasion, however, everyone was not in accord on the method. A fish rose close to Henry, and he thought he saw a chance to pitch him out on shore with his foot. So he let loose a mighty kick at the same time Hank let loose an arrow. The fish was not troubled much by either, because and arrow and leg met in mid-air. The steel tip slipped through the calf of the leg just as it might have through the fish and stuck through several inches on the other side. Fortunately it had no barbs. Henry, as nonchalantly as though he did it every morning before breakfast, reached down and pulled it out.

Ma had plenty to say about bows and arrows then. That was the time they began to lose their interest for me.

It almost draws my muscles into knots now to think of the trouble we used to have with cold water. For some reason, we felt we had to go swimming every time we went fishing. And the fishing started very early in the spring. P erhaps it was because we felt the need of a bath after a long winter.

Hank and I went over to Shoofly Creek one spring for the first fishing trip. The day was mild and the water looked inviting. We stripped off and I was the first one in. The water's temperature belied it's pleasant appearance and it was with great relief, that I pulled across as quickly as possible and out on the other side.

Meanwhile, Hank had stood irresolutely, awaiting my verdict. As I climbed up the bank, he shouted across to me, "How's the water?" I managed pretty well to control the chattering of my teeth while I replied, "Oh, it's not so bad." Thus, reassured, he plunged in. But before he ever came up, he realized it had been a mistake. He lost no time in beating his way back from whence he came. Without a word, he began rapidly to pull on his clothes.

I watched him a minute or so, then asked, "what's the matter, Hank? Was the water too cold?" It was obvious that he had been containing himself with an effort, as he exploded, "Wait 'til I get my breath and I'll tell you."

But Hank really did not mind the cold water so much. On another occasion, I guess he was a little older, he

came upon a small bunch of ducks on a pond and killed two of them. The pond was frozen solid except for a small area near the center which the ducks had occupied through the night and which had been kept free by their agitation of the water. So the dead ducks were out in the center and the ice not strong enough to bear his weight. Not to bring home his kill was unthinkable, so Hank stripped and started after them. With a stick, He broke the ice ahead of him until he had a clear channel to the open water. But as the cold water rose slowly beyond his waist, he began to feel less keenly the importance of getting those ducks. He splashed water over his shoulders and screwed up his courage but it was just no go. He just could not bring himself to venture deeper into that water.

He returned to the bank and dressed, but he still couldn't give up those ducks. So he worked around to the opposite side of the pool and began chaunking at them with sticks and balls of mud so that the waves thus created gently drifted them to the edge of the open water and into the channel he had cut. It took a lon g time but he brought home his game.

Once we went to the creek when it was still full of floating ice, the thaw ha ving opened a strip along the bank. We had better sense than to try swimming in that, but little enough that we thought it was fun to ride the ice. Ben Walcher jumped out across the open water on to the ice and as he landed, a large slab broke away from the main body. Hiw weight tipped it up and he slid quietly off into the water, disappearing completely, as it righted itself, and left him on the under side.

Ben was no little surprised to come up and bump on the under side of the ice cake, but he knew how to take care of himself in the water. He made his way toward the bank and when he came in sight, we pulled him out. Boys live over almost anything.

Tied in with our hunting experiences were our ventures into wierd gastronomical experiments, such as the time when we decided to find out whether a rat was good to eat. Hank and I, toghether with several of the Walcher boys, were in Shoofly bottom on a rabbit hunt in the snow. We had stopped in the creek bottom since there was timber there, had built a fire and were just sitting around relaxing and talking. The dogs got to digging under a drift. We investigated, but satisfied there was no worthwhile game there, had returned to the fire. The dogs uncovered and killed a big woods rat. Someone proposed we cook it and find out how a rat tasted.

I skinned it and was principle chef. We cut it into small pieces and toasted it over the fire on sticks. We

decided that it was perfectly all right meat, but since we had no salt, it was not very palatable.

Later, we were down in the Indian Territory on a hunt, about the same crowd. Pa had brought Hank and me, and Big Al Walcher, though he nev er hunted much, had brought his wagon with his brother Ben, and Tom Wynn. Pa had been in that section before, but he got just a little bit lost and we had to make a dry camp the first night. We had water with us for supper but none left for breakfast, so we started early the next morning to scout for water and a permanent camp site, leaving the wagons where they were. Hank and I got back about noon, having had no luck. Pa wasn't back yet but most of the crowd was there waiting around, hungry and impatient.

A big hawk lit in a tree near by and one of the boys killed it. We had nothing better to do so we dressed and cooked it as we had the rat. Only this time, we had salt. But we decided neithwr salt nor sauce nor Master's Touch could ever have made that bird good to ear. Not only was the flavor poor but the meat was as tough as leather.

Similarly, at one time or another, we tried nearly everything that grew. We had heard the Indians ate everything and we thought we were as good as they. Of course, we ate jackrabbit and every variety of fish we happened to catch. We decided crow and mud hen were pretty poor excuses. But prairie dog, while we did not habitually eat them or consider them game, we decided were really very fine. The principal objection to them is their white man's name which creates a false impression. They, of course, are not dogs at all but really marmots and closely related to squirrels. But false prejudice has saved their lives by the billions.

Many old plainsmen recognized their worth as food and ate them without hesitation. However, their capture was no simple matter. It was almost impossible to shoot one away from his hole, and if he tumbled backinto his hole, it was entirely too big a job to dig him out. But there was a scheme which worked. An open-ended barrel, or something similar, placed over a hole and partially filled with dirt would bring an investigation to determine the cause of the obstruction. Upon finding the hole blocked, the prairie dog would immediately burrow through, the loose dirt would cose the hole behind him and he would be trapped. Of course, he would burrow back but that took time and by frequent running of the trap, he could be found still on top.

Next to hunting and fishing, probably our greatest misadventures, and certainly our most dangerous ones, were with horses. I suppose I fell off of horses more than anybody, but I was never really thrown from a bucking horse.

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Back to hunting and fishing, probably our greatest misadventures, and certainly our most dangerous ones, were with horses. I suppose I fell off of horses more than anybody, but I was never really thrown from a bucking horse.

We were farm boys not western desperados or rodeo heroes. We broke manywild colts to harness and to ride but we did it in a quiet, sensible way. It was never intended, under our mehtods, that horses should buck while being broken and they very seldom did.

We got two wild ponies once that came close to making us trouble. They determined not to accept restraint and their actions were most unpredictable. One day I was on one of them with lead ropes tightly held on each side. We was led down through the pasture and she gradually became quieter. The ropes were removed and I rode on alone. We came to a little creek which ran through our place, she could have stepped across without touching water had she wanted to. But she didn't, and she wouldn't. I tried everything but she would not budge. Pa, who had held one of the ropes, had been catching up to us in the meantime, and he came up behind her and slapped her sharply with the flat of a board. That got results but not the kind he wanted. She rared straight up and I felt her going over backwards. I slid off to the side and we both fell in a heap. In her struggles to bet up, she stepped directly on my foot. It hurt a plenty but I was saved from serious injury by the softness of the mud.

Hank had a similar experience but one that could have been much worse. He started one day on a young, untrained horse over to Mack Blue's across Shoofly Creek. Again the horse refused to enter the water and reared over backward. Hank got out from under all right, but when the horse rose, he found that a foot had slipped through a stirrup and was hung.

The horse started back up the trail away from the creek, gradually pi cking up speed. There was a sharp bend as the road turned down into the crddk, with a heavy corner post inthe fence. Hank saw they were going to cut close to the post and he resolved to catch it and try to hang on. He did not know what would give, but he felt that was his best chance.

But after a mile or so of dragging, which was actually only fifty or sixty feet, and just before they reached the post, the foot slipped out and the crisis was over. He never learned whether his leg or arms or the stirrup would have pulled off first.

Dingus was a highly nervous horse that we never could get to settle down. He was terribly affected by the bite of a horse fly. Once I jumped on his bare back to run some errand and was proceeding peacefully along when I felt the horse flinch. I looked back and discovered a horse fly but it was beyond my reach. I kn ew a runaway was coming but I sat frozen, unable to think of a thing to do. Why I did not jump off immediately, I'll never know. After what

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The horse started back up the trail away from the creek, gradually picking up speed. There was a sharp bend as the road turned down into the creek, with a heavy corner post in the fence. Hank saw they were going to cut close to the post and he resolved to reach it and try to hang on. He did not know what would give, but he felt that was his best chance.

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seemed an eternity, the fly really set his teeth in, or whatever it is a fly bites with, and Dingus jumped like he had been shot. W e parted company quite suddenly and violently, and I went home with a badly sprained arm.

We could even have accidents, nor near accidents, at the peaceful pursuit of plowing. O nce I had a frisky young horse in a team, and as was customary while plowing, had the reins around my waist. She balked and I lammed her good with a whip. She took off in a dead run, exciting her partner in the team into joining her. Had I been able to keep the plow in the ground, I could have nipped it in the vud, but she surprised me and I lost control. The plow went over on it's side and so did I . We both dragged along for some time. I was the first to get free, the reins breaking. The team went on for some distance when suddenly the plow bounced into an upright position and the share dug into the ground again. It stopped, but the wooden beam smapped under the blow and the team kept going.

I decided that day that spirited horses and reins aroung a waist were not for each other. I did my future plowing with looped lines held in my hand.

When Hank was only about twelve, we still had a piece of ground which had never been broken. Our father hired Jake Sells to come over with his powerful big team of bays to do the job. At one point, there was a slight wash across the field where the grass grew particularly rank, and it was decided that Hank should ride the plow across this section to help keep it in the ground.

He would ride across then jump off and wait for Jake to make the round of the field. It was hot and the freshly turned soil looked inviting, so he lay down in the open furrow He had no intention of going to sleep but he did. When Jake came back, he could not see him between the grass on the one hand and the turned sod on the other.

The horses saw him and stopped. But Jake urged them on. Eighteen hundred pounds of animal raised a forefoot gingerly and sat it down on Hank's posterior. The horse knew it was not the thing to do and he did not apply full pressure. But it was enough to awaken Hank. It must have been pretty awe-inspiring to see what loomed over him. Of course, he yelled and Jake realized what was going on in time to avert tragedy. The horse never moved and Jake had to come forward and hold up the foot while Hank scrambled out.

I had another runaway in which I should have been killed but was saved by the intelligence and strength of my team. I had taken a load of corn to Wellington and has

started home with an empty wagon, except for a few supplies I had picked up at the grocery store. Among these was a gallon glass jug of kerosene. After crossing Slate Creek and topping the rise, there was a long grade sloping gently down into a little draw. It was just enough of a grade that the empty wagon kept rolling up on to the horses and the brake was not good enough to hold it back. The horses were getting more and more nervous about it. Then something gave way and the tongue fell out of the neckyoke. That did it. The team took offin a run, the wagon tongue plowing up the road between them.

After a little, the tongue began to track to one side and I could not keep the horses astraddle of it. By the time we reached the creek, we were clear out of the road and headed for a bank several feet high which would surely tear everything all to pieces if we went over. With all m my other troubles, I seemed terribly worried that that jug of kerosene would be broken. I finally reached down and picked it up, thinking I could jump with it in my arms, a thing which would have been very foolish.

But then suddenly it was all over. Just when it looked like we could not possibly avoid going into the creek bed, the horses saw the bank and a covering of ice in the creek. They plowed to a stop and stood with feet set. The wagon jammed into them, but it did not break them over the edge. Sonetimes a horse has more sense than you might think.

We had our troubles with cattle too. These were almost exclusively our own faults. We seldom had anything around but the gentlest of milk cows but we could almost have found a way to aggravate a mouse into attacking us.

Calf riding was quite a sport with some of the older boys and I do not remember that any of us suffered from it. But both Hank and John learned early that it was not for them. John was too little to be playing with us and certainly too little to engage in the calf riding rodeo. He was thrown off and pretty badly shaken up. Hank was trhown at a time when he thought everything was serene and peaceful.

He and John had gone to bring a cow and calf in to water. John had a rope around the calf's nose to lead it and Hank was riding it. She was perfectly gentle but she broke into a trot and John held back on the rope to stop her. She came suddenly to the end of the slack and was jerked up short, with head down, by the rope. Hank kept going. He landed in a heap with his breath completely knocked out. He thought he was dying before he finally started breathing again.

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When bringing them i n, especially, if they had been kept from a calf, they often got in a hurry. A boy could hardly hold one back. And besides it was great fun to fall down and let ourselves be dragged. It was not so much fun, however, if we suddenly hit a rough spot or some obstruction loomed in the path. It was nearly impossible to turn loose quickly enough to avoid rope burns on our hands.

A favorite pastime, particularly, during noon hour at school, was to hold on to the rear end-gate of a passing wagon and see now fast we could run. There was no fun to i t, of course, unless we could get the driver to speed up. But sometimes they over did it. There was such a thing as speeding up to the point of being afraid to turn loose. That situation had to give sooner or later and if the driver did not slow down, it meant an eventual tumble and skid in the dust of the road with dire consequences to clothes and hide if nothing more serious.

Once I caught a ride, so I thought, with some boys in a horse drawn sleigh. But as we approached the house they began to increase speed and I say they had no intention of letting me out. For some reason, I felt I had to get home, and after they had carried me two or three hundred yards past without any indication of listening to my pleas to stop, I decided to jump. I thought I spotted a soft bank of snow and cut loose. I landed every way but softly. But we never felt we were seriously hurt so long as there were no broken bones.

We did have some pastimes which were less dangerous, and I guess just as entertaining. One of these was a game we called "Boss of Bunker Hill." Bunker Hill was any convenient hay or straw stack, and the object was to push anyone off it but yourself. While it was a rough enough game, there was always a soft spot to land.

Some of us took pretty seriously to the business of learning to walk a tight rope. We never progressed to the point of getting the rope high in the air, but Charlie Walcher and I die get to where we could do a fair job of staying on it. Some circus lost a great act by not having a scout around.

I have often wondered why we never had more fights with the neighborhood kids. I guess we were all pretty tame. I think the real reason, however, was that there were not so very many of us and we grew up together as friends with no real reason for factional disputes. There were minor arguments to be sure but animosities did not last long.

There was the time Hank had trouble, over nothing, with Little Al Walcher. Al was our closest neighbor and for years, almost a constant companion. But he was a bit older than

Hank , and Hank thought he had been riding him about something. They were playing with swords made of dried sunflower stalks. I do not know what started it, but they squared away and Al dared Hank to punch him with the stalk. There are things that a man of honor just must not take. Hank punched. But honor did not extend to standing to fight a bigger boy, so he lit out as hard as he could go with Al hot on the trail. He was still carrying the lethal weapon, and it had a heavy ball of dry dirt entangled in the root clump. Seeing he was about to be caught, Hank grabbed the stalk by the upper end, amd without slackening speed, let fly a backhand swing at his tormentor. The heavy butt caught Al full on the side of the head and he went down like a slugged ox.

Hank was really scared now. He thought for a minute, he had killed Al but he was some worried about himself too. There would be dire consequences at home, but most of all he was scared of what would happen when the school teacher heard about it.

Al was not long in collecting himself, however, and soon took up the pursuit again. But Hank had established a good lead by this time and made good his retreab. To add insult to injury, out of the meaness of his heart, Hank went over to Al's house the next day and, in the presence of persons who made retribution impracticable, inquired very sweetly after the extent of the injury to his head. Al, of course, boiled, but did not attempt retaliation.

It was the thing among fashionable young men about the country, in their late teens, to carry some sort of side arm. Why, I do hot know, because, certainly most of us never had the slightest intention of using it even had an occasion arisen. But in due course I reached that stage too. I first had a 22 calibre pistol I traded someone out of, later in turn trading it for a beautiful old broken down 44 cap and ball. I kept that one for many years and actually did use it some for hunting.

But this penchant for carrying a pistol cost me one of the most painful injuries of my life. There had been a roller skating rink established in Wellington, then a little later, one in South Haven. The skating bug hit everybody. Scarcely any of the c ountry boys could skate at all and why they let us clutter up the floor, I don't know. But they did, and we did, and often there were as many people sitting as skating. It was great fun for those who could skate to upset those of us who could not by a casual brush or subtle trip. Sometimes the party got rough and feelings high.

One night in South Haven, I was trying to skate and was silly enough to be out on the floor with my good-for nothing pistol tucked into my hip pocket. Someone gave me

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One night in South Haven, I was trying to skate and was silly enough to be out on the floor with my good-for nothing pistol tucked into my hip pocket. Someone gave me

a gentle nudge and my feet went out in front, and I landed squarely on my trusty side arm. I think it ground all the way in and sparks flew between steel and bone. At any rate, it hurt like the very dickens and was sore for weeks afterward.

A very prevalent sport, and I was on both giving and receiving ends of this one, was to annoy young swains who were out with a lady. The easiest way to do this, was to steal the buggy whip. I never did that because I never felt exactly right about stealing. But it became common practice for all the young fellows to carry the buggy whip right along into church, or literary society, the skating rink or anywhere else they happened to go. If they did not, they knew it would be gone when they came out.

It was also necessary upon coming out from any such gathering to check harness or saddle carefully. A loosened yoke strap or a burr under a saddle could create no end of trouble on the way home. Deb Whitten used to come to our house to spark Dorcas Grantham, a girl my mother had helping with the housework for a while. One night when he came, several of us boys were hanging around with nothing better to so decided to fix his horse. I think Billie Blackwelder put me up to it. At any rate, I became the electee for the dirty work. All I did was to remove the bit from the horse's mouth. But when Deb left he did not notice it. The horse was very spirited and, like all horses, anxious to move when he thought he was headed home. So he took out in a dead run and stayed that way with Deb hanging on and able to do little else. The horse assumed the lot gate was open when they got home, but it was not, and Deb wound up with a badly bruised leg.

But as we got older, one of our favorite methods of torment for others, was the cheverie. This was an all-male party and it took place whenever a couple in the community got married. That is, it was all-male except for the bride and perhaps one of the mothers if the young cou;le happened to go to the home of one set of parents for the night. Typically, these parties wound up with the newly weds coming out and inviting all and sundry to come in for cigars, apples and in some instances, liquid refreshments.

Even staid, middle aged farmers such as my father sometimes joined us in these silly expeditions, and he was with us the night Beaman Smith got married. He even helped with the shooting. U.S. Walcher had married Beaman's sister not so long before, so Beaman was sort of kinfolks. There were about a dozen boys in the crowd and two or three men.

The young folks, this time, had a house of their own to go to, so there was no one but them for us to keep awake.

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Possibly because of that privacy, they dedided they were not going to come out and invite us in. And they never did. We made all the noise of a Fourth of July in election year but it did no good. By loading a gun with a heavy charge of black powder and firing it across a window, the panes could be blown in by the concussion. This we did until there was not a pane left in the house. To be sure, it was a small place with only a few windows, but we got them all. Finally someone reached through the glassless wimdow of the bedroom and lighted the lamp on the table beside their bed. But still they would not co-operate. The members of the party had to finally break it up in disgust and go home.

I could go on with these stories of boyish escapades but probably I have gone far enough already. I am sure they are not worth much and are probably of little interest to a reader. But I have felt that their insertion here might help to establish the environment in which we grew up and thus bring into sharper relief the overall picture of the frontier.

Chapter IX

Westward The March Of Empire

About eighteen years is the proper age for a farm boy to begin to feel he should look for more distant horizons. He thinks then there must be something better, and if not better, at least different. More than likely he knows it will be only the latter, but he is noe the less eager to explore any differences. So I think it was natural that the year I reached that milestone, I too should feel the urge to escape the routine of farm life and seek my fortune in a foreign land. Actually, to me, Wichita represented that foreign land. At least in those days of horse, or foot transportation, it was far enough away and big enough to represent enchantment to us.

At any rate, that fall after the crops were in, I determined to find a job. The younger boys were old enough now to help with the chores and I felt I could be spared for a while. Little Al Walcher and I talked it over and felt that surely there must be something for us in Wichita. There was, of course, the railroad through Wellington, but we never had money enough to ride it. We didn't now, that is we couldn't afford to spend our meager resources in so frivolous a manner. But we did it anyway. After buying our tickets and paying for two or three nights lodging at the hotel in Wichita, we were pretty flat. We looked over the town and Al wanted to go home while we could still get there. So we were back in less than a week with nothing for our efforts and all our money gone.

But I was determined not to give up. Finding no one willing to share my probable ill fortune, I set out alone. Someone took me into Wellington and I took off to walk the thirty miles to Wichita. I had about fifty cents in my pocket and there seemed no other way to get there. I had gone only about three, however, when I passed a farm where haying was in operation. Being so desperately short of funds, I stopped to see if I could pick up a few days work, and did. I believe I worked four days, at a dollar a day and my keep.

So I set out for Wichita again a few days later; richer but still a long way from my destination. I walked every foot of the way and from sun to sun, but I decided thn that about twenty miles in a day was all I would ever want to tackle again. I was young and healthy and hardened to the heavy work of farm life, but no one not especially trained for it-can walk thirty miles in a day and enjoy it.

This time the employment agency in Wichita was a little more helpful. They had had a request for laborers on a railroad building project on the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific west of there in Pratt County. Before my money was intirely gone, they had me on a train, no fare required, on my way to work camp at the railhead.

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This was a period of considerable rail expansion. It might be said that Kansas was the railroad frontier of the day as few lines had been extended farther west. Fifteen years before the first transcontinental railroad had been completed, when the Union Pacific and the Central Pacific met at Promotory, Utah. But the second such line, the Northern Pacific, had been completed only the year before and this same year, 1884, the Southern Pacific linked New Orleans and San Francisco.

But these were main lines only, supplying little or no cross or branch transportation. In Kansas this feeder line system was now underway. One big impetus to this type of contrruction was the movement of trail herds up from Texas and Indian Territory to reach the eastern markets. This had been largely responsible for the branch line from Wichita through Wellington to Hunnewell, and for other terminals such as Caldwell and Dodge City. It had been necessary when trail driving first started immediately after the war, to take cattle all the way to Abilene, far into the northeast quarter of the state.

Railroad extensions were greatly influenced fy the will of the people in that the railroads in most instancesm managed to get someone else to pay for most of the expense of construction. This was done through bond issues, usually on a county basis. When enough settlers had come into an area, and enough of them wanted the railroad, a bond issue was voted, with judicious promotion by railroad officials, and they got the railroad.

This could, and often did, result in the extension of a line across a county and it's termaintion in the wide open prairie, with further extension blocked for months or years by the failure of the next county to vote bonds. But the railroads did not seem to mind and in the long run, made these gambles pay off.

I began my railroading career at the top end of a shovel, bedding ties into the newly prepared road bed. But I was ambitious and the dollar and ten cents a day I was making didn't look very big. There were other jobs on the crew which I thought I could handle as well as the next one.

Railroads were built in those days almost entirely without benefit of machines. Ties and rails were moved out to the end of the track on push cars, having been dumped beside the track from flat cars farther back. One crew unloaded the ties on the graded road bed where we bedded them in. Another rolled the rails forward lengthwise on rollers at the front end of the push car, catching them as they moved forward and dropping them into place at the end of the preceeding rail. The splicers and front spikers then slapped in enough bolts and spikes to hold the rail roughly in alignment, then the car was pushed forward to the front end of that rail and the process repeated.

The car having cleared a rail, the fisishing was the work of the rear spikers and their crew. They had to put in the additional spikes and finish bolting the connections. A final crew yet came after tnd realigned and regraded the track with crowbars and shovels, and saw to it that the whole was left complete and in good order.

For several days I pestered the foreman for a better job. Finally, in order to get rid of me, I guess, He put me on the track laying crew. This was a dollar and a quarter a day but was a back breaking work and I still wasn't satisfied. The spikers drew the same pay but got seven days for a six day week. I had had considerable experience swinging an axe and thought my skill at that should qualify me. Finally, I persuaded him to let me try my luck as a rear spiker.

A spike hammer is heavy but with a long tapering body and an, oh, so small striking face. I soon discovered that hitting a spike solidly with that tiny surface was something like shooting the head off a wild turkey at a hundred steps. A spiking crew consisted of three men. They worked in rotation, two men driving while the third got a breathing spell pinching the tie hard up against the rail with a crowbar, so the connection could be made solid. Unless all were of equal skill, the good spiker got in a brief rest while watching the poor one scramble to get his spike down. And unless the first lick got the spike solidly set, the second could easily send it flying and the job would have to start over. The poor spiker was under constant pressure; and that was me. That first day as a spiker was the longest ten hours of my life.

Actually, my two companions were not the best spikers in the world. In a way, that took some of the pressure off me but the crew as a whole was not holding up it's end and it looked like my career as a spiker was destined to be a short one.

But then I wasn't sure I would live through the day anyway. That came to be of far greater importance to me than the problem of what I would be doing tomorrow. My hands were calloused and hardened from my years on the farm but they were no match for the handle of a spiker's maul. In a short time they were masses of blisters and each new blow a torture. I ached in every muscle and many a time I felt that the next spike would surely be my last. How I made it I'll never know, but some how I staggered through 'till quitting time.

That night I was too tired to move, but I knew something had to be done if I were to work the next day. I dragged myself out to scout around for something to protect my hands. I found a discarded shoe in the camp refuse pile and cut strips of leather from it's sides. These I shaped to fit across the palms of my hands with slits for the index and

little fingers to pass through so as to hold them in place. I figured I owed my life, and surely my job, to those little strips of leather.

I expected to get fired but I think the foreman took pity on me. At any rate, the next day he assigned me to another crew and my companions here were real spikers. They, too, seemed well endowed with the spirit of tolerance and helped me considerably. One in particulat, was a fine striker and before the end of the day, he and I had worked out a system which not only helped me to save my physical being but speeded the work as well. He had me set both his spike and mine. This meant leaning and holding the spike in one hand while hitting it with the other. Perhaps he had a stiff back, or maybe leaning made him dizzy. But it suited me fine. I could set the two almost in a single operation and the short stroke was easier to make accurately than a full driving blow. In exchange for my setting the two spikes he would land the second blow on both. I think this and the leather pads were all that saved me from a quick termination of my railroading.

The entire crew was housed and fed in a tent camp which spent a few days only at a site before moving forward to keep up with the slowly unwinding ribbons of steel. Double decked bunkbeds were the only furnishings, and they were stacked in generally three to the tent, leaving little room for anything else.

This was my first experience away from home totally in the company of strangers. I found these men rough, uneducated and sometimes uncouth as they were, to be friendly and kind. They were simple and not unhappy with their jobs; for the most part, irresponsible and living only from pay day to pay day. I was amused at the passion with which most of them attacked the games of poker that went on in most of the tents every night. There was, of course, little else to do for relaxation, except to get drunk occasionally. That didn't happen often because, on our wages, few of the men could buy enough liquor to get drunk. I was surprised that the money lasted so well for card playing, but the anti was only a nickle or a dime and the bets small. Qhen a man went broke he could generally borrow against prospective winnings or another payday.

Most of the men had body lice, graybacks, we called them, and under the conditions of our living, it was next to impossible to stay free of them. Their hosts did not seem to mind much, nor try very hard to get rid of them. Greybacks knew their buddies, that is, the other guests of an individual, and if placed close to a grayback from another person, would fight like fury to the death. One method of entertainment was to match one's own champion against another' and place bets on the outcome. This was more fun than a chicken fight, and, if, during the process of scratching, a fine looking prospect for the gladiatorial ring should be dislodged, he would be carefully replaced and harbored against

against the time when a suitable match could be arranged.

The games made it pretty hard to get a night's sleep and I sure felt I needed mine. But there was nothing to do but accept the situation gracefully. So I would sit and watch and listen to the tall tales spun throughout the evenings. I got my sleep when I could or when I got tired enough that what went on around me did not bother me.

As the weeks slipped by, it began to get pretty cold on the wide open prairie; the wind whooped around us by day and sifted into the tents by night. I decided I had had enough of railroading by the time we reached the end of that project. We were stopping at the western county line to await a new bond issue. The crew, however, was being sent to another terminus farther north to begin another extension of track. This afforded a good break in the routine, so I told the foreman I thought I wouldn't go with them.

The time-keeper told me where to go to catch the work train back into Kingman to get my pay. But something went wrong, I couldn't find the train or it had already gone, and I had to spend about two dollars of my hard earned resources for fare on a passenger train. I had quit at the end of a day, and with the delay in getting started, and the slow rate of the train, it was morning when I got to Kingman. I got some breakfast and went to the office for my pay.

Considerably rankled by my first failure to beat the cost of transportation, I was determined not to let it happen again. But I must have missed the time-keeper's instructions on the second leg of the journey also. I caught a freight train all right and was heading slowly but comfortably toward Wichita. But it turned out to be the wrong one. I was the lone occupant of an otherwise empty box car until at one of the frequent stops. a brakeman discovered me.

My story of being a recently terminated employee of the road with authority to travel thereon made little impression. Neither did his hints for a fare make much impression on me. I knew he had no right to collect a fare, and I knew whatever he collected would go into his pocket and not into the coffers of the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific.

At that time, I was making no particular effort at religion, but I think I did have an inherent sense of honesty that made lying very distasteful to me. However, in this instance, I felt that lying, while perhaps, not in a good cause, was at least no worse than bribery. And besides it would save me money. So to his repeated question, I kept answering that I didn't have a thing. He did not believe me but I was wearing him down. Finally he asked once more, "you're sure you have no money?" In a effort to terminate the interview and make my argument conclusive, I pulled out my pocket knife and replied, "No sir, this is the only thing I have on me."

It was a little old knife with a broken blade, and I was sure, unworthy of his attention. But that doggoned sun of a gun took my knife and put it in his pocket. I had stuck my neck out and he had chopped it off, but I stayed on the train. And my financial statur remained on. I worried all the way to Wichita that he would come back but he did not.

It was good to get home where I could be a boy again and a man only as infrequent necessity might demand.

Chapter X

Frontier Larnin'

I was nine when we moved to Sumner County. I had attended school a short school term, for just a little while for several, or for two winters in Belmont, had even started in Howard County. But I remember little of those times and I must have profited very little from that attendance. At any rate, I always think of having started my education in Sumner County. In fact that seems to have been the beginning of most things for me.

The people who settled that area, in Western Kansas, in the '70's, and I am sure the same applied elsewhere, were for the most part, not well educated. Many had no education at all. But they were largely in favor of education and most were very loyal to the public schools.

The government survey of the country had established townships, thirty six sections of land, with four school districts per township, And in each district, a half-section of public domain was withheld from settlement and assigned to the district school. This was the nucleus around which the public school system was to be built. And the settlers were not long in getting it started. The second summer we werethere, Clarksville School was built in our district, a mile south of where we still lived on a rented farm, and we had school there the following winter. It was a one room frame structure about twenty-four by forty-eight feet. The same thing was happening in all the districts around.

A little later, for some reason I never quite understood, a special school district was created and a new school built a mile north of our farm. Our house was near the west side of our place, that being the half-section line, and the school house was similarly located though on the north side of the road. Thus it would be two miles around the road in either direction, but mostly, we walked the one mile across our neighbors' fields.

This became the Illinois School, so named because so many of the families in the district had come out from that state. My father was on the first school board. Quite a controversy arose over the location and it was built in the middle of the section, that being nearest the center of the district, over the very bitter protests of a lot of people. A few years later, a new board decided to move it down to the east corner where it would have cross-roads serving it in all directions. Fearing the displeasure and possible restraint of the faction which had located it originally, the new faction made it's plans in secret. Arrangements were made with a contractor and he was directed to bring in his equipment after dark. Before morning, and before anyone knew what was afoot, the job was done. The building sets there yet.

Chapter X

Frontier Learning

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However, the school houses were more than just schools. They were community houses and social centers for the district, the only place for indoor public meetings of any sort. They were used for religious services until churches were gradually built, serving all denominations alike. All varieties of community gatherings were held here, educational, political, social and cultural.

We generally had four months school each winter and two or three months in the summer. The split term, of course, was in deference to the necessity for farm children to help with the planting and harvesting in spring and fall, a custom persisting in some communities today.

There were no grades in the schools. Teachers organized as many classes as they thought they could handle and as available pupils were suited for. It was a haphazard arrangement but most teachers did the best they could. We had readers from one to six, arithmetic first, second and third parts, and a spelling book. Gradually other subjects and activities were introduced, but it was a slow process.

Everyone between the ages of five and twenty-one could go to school if they wanted to and whether or not they learned anything. I did just that, and so did the rest of our family, though I was the only one of us who reached the age of twenty-one, and thus quit while we were there. I am not sure I would have had to quit even then, but I felt I was getting a little big for country school by that time, perhaps mentally as well as physically. Be that as it may, I had been over everything the school had to offer several times and should have been well packed with knowledge, whether I was or not.

There was little or nothing in the way of student recreational equipment or facilities and, of course, no organized athletics. But kids the world over are masters of resourcefulness and we never lacked for play. Dare Base, Blackman, Town Hall, Old Cat, and any home made game that came to mind and many we invented ourselves; these were our companions and our joy.

It could hardly be expected that such schools would be good from the educational standpoint. Certainly in the beginning, they were far from it. First, the teachers as a class, were poor. Many had been educated little beyond the basic levels they were attempting to teach. I tried in the later years to proceed into the study of such high school subjects as algebra, rhetoric and literature, but got little help from the teachers. They were willing enough but most were not sufficiently trained. Teaching aids were almost non-existant, and the fuildings themselves were woefully inadequate. Throwing all sizes and ages into one group all

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the time made for many inconveniences. And in all the schools there were some, often a large percentage, who went to school because they were forced to by misguided, in their eyes, parents, or who delighted in seeing how much trouble they could make. Sometimes this was plenty.

W e lived near two of the wildest border towns of the old West, Hunnewell and Caldwell. At this time, they were the southern terminals of rival railroads built especially for shipping of trail cattle brought up through Indian Territory from Texas.

The border towns were a demoralizing influence on the schools. To impressionable boys, and even some girls, they represented the glamor that, to them was the West. Young people who had frequent opportunities to visit them, often became enamoured of their evil ways and brought them back to homes and schools. Drinking, profanity, fighting and loose social behavier in general are with us always, but such habits seemed particularly easy to pick up in the environment of such places as Hunnewell and Caldwell.

One case in point was that of a boy whom I shall call Fred. He was several years older than I and represented the "big boys" when I was only starting. He was from a good family and never had been troublesome before.

One summer, he was seventeen or eighteen; he got a job on a ranch in the Territory down below Hunnewell. His time was spent with cattle and cowboys and often the work brought him to town. He came home and back to school in the fall. But what a change. He was no longer a simple country boy but a "tough". He decided to make it his business to break up the school. The teacher, Mr. Cole, was a young man about twenty-five, frailly built, more mature, but no larger than Fred.

Mr. Cole made every reasonable effort to controll the miscreant, but the situation went rapidly from bad to worse. One day he had to try to correct Fred, and the boy started cursing him in front of the whole school of younger pupils. When ordered to hush, he merely cursed the harder and came at the teacher with fists flying. Now he had sorely misjudged his opponent. Mr. Cole's guard came up fast and his right went out at the opportune time to colide with Fred's oncoming face. Fred sat down hard in the aisle. He staggered to his feet with blood streaming freely from his nose and made for the door. But the teacher was much faster and before the boy could make it, he had him by the collar, the stove poker in the other hand. Fred was escorted back to his seat, jammed therein with considerable force and told to sit there. He sat. Mr. Cole said very little to him or to the class, but did tell him he was expelled from school. He told him if he would bring his father with him and make

due appologies for his conduct, he could re-enter. In the meantime he must not come near the school. But Fred did not come back. This incident had been a point of decision for him and his ill training led him to the wrong one. He never attended school again and never made anything useful of his life.

Such events were not the rule nor were they by any means rare. Sometimes a teacher got beaten up by the tough boys, though not often. And we always felt that most of the bad influences that created such trouble came from outside sources; they were not usually inherent in the boys or their home environments.

But a greater trouble unsued when parents took up the causes of their children against the teacher. Corporal punish ment was used a great deal. Some teachers could get away with it fairly well but others did not. Sometimes it led to fights with students or parents, sometimes to court.

As we largely created our school recreation, so we made the schools our centers of entertainment. Outside the normal events of the school day, there were spelling matches, box suppers, singing schools and Last Day Exhibitions. These furnished lots of fun and happy times for all. The debating and literary societies, while not so directly sponsored by the schools, were conducted in them and supplied, probably, as important an educational need as any other part of the program. They reached parents and non-school members of the community as well as students, and were our greatest single sources of culture and information on national and world events. And of entertainment too. Many a sublime literary passage descended to rediculous under the rendition of willing but untrained students, and many foolish subjects, as well as profound ones, were heatedly batted about by debating teams. These meetins were an outlet for a free people, meeting almost without restriction, where, without coaching or professional help of any kind, they acted as they pleased. They brought out the originality latent in an individual, this being perhaps their greatest merit and certainly their greatest charm. There was a remarkable display of individual thinking, natural brightness or the lack of it, spontaneous wit and humor and an uninhibited display of human emotions. Anything could happen and the time passed with few dull moments.

I looked forward to those events with the greatest anticipation, as did most of the uoung folks of the community. I rather specialized in debate, though I fancied myself some what talented in other lines as well and took part in the literary and dramatic presentations, did some singing and dug endlessly into possibilities for new program. My brother Hank four years younger than I, became the comedian of the whole countryside, and Orana, two years younger than Hank, did her share in the dramatic presentations. Even the youngest of the family, Nellie, contributed. I guess she was born with a

talent greater than any of the rest of us. In later ye she became a very fine singer. But someone recognized talent when she was very young. At the age of four, sh took part in a Last Day of School exhibition, singing "Rock-a-bye-baby". She stood on a table, draped proudly in a wide violet scarf our father had worn in some kind of parade back in Illinois in honor of the returning soldiers. It was a foot or more wide and hung over one shoulder, being gathered under a belt at the waist and hanging below the knees.

The debating and literary society in our community met each Friday evening during the winter school session. The general order of events was first a program of dramatic readings, "barber shop" type songs, ballads, comics, colored minstral and Irish humor skits. Nothing but his own genius, if any, controlled a performer, making his presentation always fresh and interesting, if unpolished. Then, after a recess, came the debates. They, too, were interesting even when they had little other value. People of all sorts took part, young and old, men and women, almost never schooled in the subject of argument. But they were willing to defend any side of any question. Original thinking and manner of presentation could, and often did, result in the making of "much ado about nothing". On the other hand, much interesting and thought provoking entertainment resulted from the discussion of very unimportant, or even nonsensical subjects. The net result was good.

Symbolical of the times, perhaps, was one favorite subject, debated over and over in and between the societies, "Resolved: That Intemperance is more Distructive than War". Many subjects were very much less imposing and important to mankind, some were completely silly and some were rendered wo by the participants, though they might have been assigned in all seriousness.

There was the time I was assigned to select the greatest man in American History and to defend my selection. This was to be a three sided debate involving, also, a young doctor recently come into the community, Oliver Pennypacker, and a dignified, respected and elderly farmer, Mr. Perrin Oliver was an irresponsible and worthless drunkard, who had been highly educated by his family and then sent west to see if another environment could straighten him out. But he was smart and clever and a gay blade about the country. He was later to become Mr. Perrin's son-in-law, God rest the daughter's soul. But all that is beside the point.

Well, Oliver and I made it up to reduce the subject from the lofty eminence it deserved. I agreed to choose Wild Bill

Hickock if he would take Jessie James. The massacre of General Custer and his Seventh Cavalry was an event of recent history and the general was a great hero. So it was not unnatural that, in all seriousness, Mr Perrin should select him thus bringing all our heroes in similar molds and close to home. Custer won the debate but Jessie and Wild Bill won the crowd. We gave them a show.

Hank made, perhaps, his greatest hit with a recitation of what we always called Mark Twain's Cat Story. It was clipped from a newspaper. Twain being currently a great national figure in the literary world and his writings, Particularly the humorous ones, being widely printed. This was a tale of a boy who was not invited to his sister's taffy party, but who, in his discosolence, organized one of his own in an upstairs bed room, having gotten together with a couple of his friends. In the midst of festivities below, yet another party was organized, this by two cats who became hotly involved on the roof ridge outside the boy's window. On a dare, one boy was persuaded to go out through the window and break up the fight.

There was snow on the ground and ice on the roof, and the boy was dressed only in a short night shirt. But he accomplished his mission, and grabbed a cat. The cat didn't take it lying down, however, and in the melee, our hero lost his grip and slid off the porch roof, landing on what would have been the seat of his pants, had he had pants on, smack in the middle of the hot taffy where it had been set out in saucers in tht snow to cool. The girls quickly discovered he was not dressed for company and went away from there in all directions, squaling their outraged femininity. The boy was no less embarrassed and equally desirous of disappearing. He dashed up the stairs, whoopin' and cussin' and scattering bits of china and chunks of blistering taffy at every jump.

Well, Mark Twain and Hank made it much funnier than I and he was called upon for a repeat performance time and again, not only at our own society but, also, at those of the neighboring schools.

I, too, made something of a reputation as a singing comedian, but I never approached Hank's personality at farecical expressions. We both sang, sometimes together, sometimes in quartettes and sometimes I sang by myself. I found and introduced to the community, one song which I think I can remember yet. Silly- of course. Crude-undoubtedly, but no more so than "Puttie, Puttie, Concrete Mixers" or "Come Ona My House". It filled a need in the lives of listeners. It went something like this:

Love, love, love is a very funy thing,
It touches the young and the old.
Just like a plate of boarding house hash,
And many a man has been sold.

Chorus: So boys keep away from the girls I say
And give them plenty of room,
For when you are wed, they will bang you 'till you're dead
With the bald-headed end of a broom.

When a fellow gets stuck on a pretty girl
He'll treat her as gentle as a dove.
He'll spend his money and call her his honey
To show that he's solid with his love.

Chorus:

When his money's all gone and his clothes are in pawn
He'll find the old saying is true
That a girl on the arm is worth two on the farm
But what is a fellow goin' to do.

Chorus:

Our Last Day of School exhibitions, too, deserve a word of commendation. They were a kind of theatrical. Most of us had never seen a presentation of the legitimate stage, in fact, had never been in a theatre. But there seems to be something of the dramatic inherent in most people, and those untutored players in those amateur theatricals found a place for natural, and often very fine, self-ex pression. We built curtained and furnished the stage ourselves. We found our makeup in cheese cloth, paper, burnt cork and shoe polish. We did our own designing and our own dressing. Then we played the short plays according to our own tastes. Hank, Orana and I had extensive experience in these activities and acquired reputations of which we were quite proud.

The programs were always similar; two and a half hours long, made up mostly of several short plays, about one or two acts. We always played to a full house and always held it's attention. Here, as in the debating, the free moving, self-asserting originality of the cast was the great charm.

One year Hank, Orana and I, as well as a few others, felt deeply honored by being invited to help out at the Last Day exercises at Carriger School, having prepared and presented a pretty good program atour own. Hank, Charlie Walcher and Bert Barringer were in a blackface skit called "Old Dismal from Dismal Swamp". Old Dismal, played by Charlie, was just that, and he opened the show with a long loliloquy concerning his ill-fortune in having grown old without friends to brighten his declining years and to share his wealth. But significently, he kept at his side, a musket to see that no one did share that wealth. Ensued a lively session in which each of the three contrived to steal first the gun and then the money from each other, until the audience hardly knew or little cared who wound up with them in the end.

Orana and I were in another play. I was a coutry editor and I had exposed various and sundry nefarious activities in my paper to such an extent that the perpetrators thereof, were gunning for me. One evening as I sat in my chair with my feet on the table reading my favorite newspaper, my own, one of the scoundrels, played by Charlie Lalicker, slipped into the room behind me with malice in his heart. He carried a giant sunflower stalk with a root clump six inches across as a club. Being the hero, I, of course, discovered him in time. Grabbing up my trusty old cap and ball forty-five, I whirled and blasted him.

The pistol was somewhat overloaded with black powder, and, of course, the ball had been omitted. Our only lights were open kerosene lamps, and the concussion of the discharge blew them all out except in the extreme back of the room. Startled but undaunted, and unmindful of the shrieks and gasps of the audience, Charlie proceeded with his line. "Holy Saints." it went. "Murder, Don't shoot, It's myself, your best friend." And I came back with mine, "So I see. Your friendship was such that you were just going to crack my skull in declaration of it.

The show must go on, we thespians always say. Yes, these things were crude. But remember, it was the frontier. And often these rather rough and impromptu entertainments had in them a good deal of cumulative cultural value.

These have been called the horse and buggy days. And that, with a somewhat questionable inflection. Well, so they were. But those who think they were slow, do so only because they were born too late ot participate therein. The only thing which might have helped us to have more fun would have been to have a few more horses and buggies. We may have been rough but we were happy, and there were no more no-accounts, no greater percentage of delinquency, crime or immoral conduct among us than there are now.

Not the least of our pleasures derived from our trips to and from our social events. On foot or on horseback, in wagon or buggy, in large groups or small, with or without girls, these trips were parties in themselves. Because it took longer to get to where we were going, only meant, we had more time for a good time. And racing two teams could be as thrilling for us, and as foolhardy as racing two hot-rods is for our grandchildren.

Hank thinks he nearly got his on one such occasion. We were heading home, a bunch of us, in a wagon, several girls including Orana, with U.S. Walcher driving. He had his strawberry roan mare and our Old Dolly, both far more spirited and foolish than their age and sex might indicate. Rue Chenowith showed up along side of us with his big team of mules. He often said they could outrun any team in the country. His two sisters and one or two others were with him. The lane was wide enough, the moment propetious, and before

anyone knew what was happening, the race was on.

All the girls in both wagons, cowered in the bottom screaming. Hank had been caught in an unfavorable position directly over the rear wheels, where he got the worst bouncing. But he stood on his knees, clinging to the side board, lending his moral support with the rest of us. That is, until we came to a corner. The wagon took it all right, on two wheels, but Hank didn't. His knees came up off the floor and he stood on his hands, he thinks, digging his nails into that sideboard for an eternity before he and the wagon again made connection with each other and the road. He spent the rest of the race flat in the wagon bed with the girls.

W e beat those mules.

Yes, those were the horse and buggy days, God Bless 'em.

Chapter XI

And Religion

As the schools, with all their shortcomings, were a very important part of our lives and a great power for community betterment, so, too, were the churches. More correctly, I should say church people. Organized churches of any strength were few and far between, though they multiplied as the settlers multiplied. Many of the itinerant preachers, who visited or lived among us from time to time, were without proper credentials and nearly all were without adequate educational background to furnish the leadership we so badly needed.

I wish to make it clear that I will not say here, or anywhere, anything against religion. It is not by accident that all the world's peoples through all the ates have been led by a force beyond their ken, nor that throughout all the differences in religious beliefs, there has run a common thread of basic truth. I believe profoundly in the Christian religion. I think it is the most powerful, the most miraculous, and altogether, the most wonderful force the world has known.

So it is not exactly religion I am going to discuss. More correctly, it is people. Funny people, ignorant people, even wicked people, have made of religion, an occasion, almost a laughtin stock. But religion, and particularly the Christian religion, has gone on and shall go on in spite of the foibles of men, and the studied efforts on the part of some of them.

Religion embraces the entire gamut of human emotions and beliefs, from the most childish superstitions or grossest materi alism to the most transcendental mysticism. Nearly Nearly always there are parts of it that cannot be rationalized; it is upon these points that differences are hinged and uninformed persons, human nature being what it is, feel the greatest freedom to speak and act/

The American frontier did not contribute anything now to religion. But often it did bring together almost every conceivable interpretatinn of the Christian Bible along with many unscholarly approaches to the subject. This tended to create a great clash and clatter among the clans, and to on e who could view the whole abstractly, a considerable amusement.

Any man's faith is his most sacred possession. Regardless of how false or how faint, it is worthy of some respect from an outsider. So I do not speak flippantly of it or of him. But I feel I can smile a little at human peculiarities, even at what I believe to be weaknesses, and still retain a genuine respect for both the individual and the opinions. Nor would I begrudge the same attitude toward me. So if I

find something funny in some of the things I have seen done in the name of religion, I feel I am only laughing at people, a privilege I gladly extend to others in regard to myself.

From my earliest recollection, we had about us in the neighborhood, Lutherans, Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, Campbellites(who wanted everyone to call them Christians whether they were or not). Baptists (thirty-seven varieties) Saints of more varieties than that. Who were the Saints? I do not know. The Mormans wanted to be called Saints; so did the "Church of God" people and the "Pentecostal" people, and I don't know how many more. They all looked about alike to us boys, and they all had their funny side.

Of course there were, and are, many points upon which denominations disagree. If there were not, there would not be denominations, but there were a few doctrines and practices always in the forefront of all talk and dissertations. Principally, these were Baptism, the New Birth, the True Church, The day of the Sabbath, perserverance of the Saints, Infant emersion. These doctrines and differences persist today; but in those days, I guess, we were less civilized. We did not know any better than to dispute over differences in religion just as we might dispute over the possession of a piece of land. We were geographically pioneers, but in our ignorance, we thought we also were pioneers in the search for truth.

I had the opportunity of attending debates between preachers or traveling lecturers, all of whom thought they knew what they were talking about. These would last for a week, sometimes two. Each protagonist would have an hour or so an evening to advance his views and a new doctrinal difference would be discussed each evening. The Campbellites always kept their arguments well moistened with "pure water" though they would baptize in any hole in the creek that came to hand, the same as the rest. The Baptists practiced "Perseverance" by repeating themselves over and over and over. The Methodists kept their notions alive by shouting louder than anyone else.

Baptism, with or in water and the reason for it all, was an all important question. Baptizings were common, and to the young people, with perhaps a little less respect than should have been present, they were great occasions, and great spectacles. These were immersions, of course, it would be a little hard to make a spectacle out of sprinkling a few drops of water on a bowed head.

One time our whole family went in the wagon to a baptizing, a considerable distance away. The scene was a creek in which there was a large hole of water. Large trees overhung the pool on both sides. In those days beaver had worked in all the creeks and created nice ponds where today there are only dry washes, the bottoms filled up with the soil of upland farms.

The minister, the candidates, the prayerful and the curious assembled along the bank under the trees. There was singing and prayer and then it was time for the baptizings. The minister took a stick and waded out into the water to test it's depth and the condition of the bottom. He returned and began to lead his first candidate into the water. As they stepped out, the limbs overhanging the water suddenly became alive with boys. They began dropping into the water one by one, until the pool was swarming with them. A few of the lower and flatter limbs had harbored a dog as well as a bot. These too came showering down. Needless to say, the baptizing was held up.

But mever let it be said, a pioneer preacher would be daunted by such juvenile attempts at eistraction. The boys were chased, the crowd brought under control, and the ceremony continued.

On another and similar occasion, I watched a woman being baptized. She was a bit nervous about going into the water and did not relax as she was told to do. Upon being let back into the water, she struggled and came up prematurely without complete immersion. Now the preacher was a great believer in complete burial in the water. As she came up and gasped for breath, he redoubled his efforts and plunged her under. Of course, she strangled miserably and came up minus any semblance of dignity. The women in the crowd thought she was drowning but she wasn't.

I saw a man bapti zed who had a stiff leg. When the minister attempted to lay him down in the water, the stiff leg did not respond well. Both he and the preacher were thrown off balance and fell, disappearing in a mighty splash. He, too, was well baptized, but without dignity.

The seventh Day Adventists came into the country and created quite an interest. My cousin, big Al Walcher, became converted to this movement and offered himself as a candidate for baptism. These people were not only immersionists, but for all practical purposes, believed that baptism within itself contained the saving grace. This made it necessary that baptisms be performed at once; otherwise, a willing soul might be lost.

Perhaps the greatest good of the various movements was their power to instill in people the desire to do anything for the cause. It happened that Al chose a poor time of the year to accept the call. It was mid-winter and the creek was frozen over with six inches of ice. But what mattered ice and weather. There was a baptizing to be done. They chopped out a hole and the minister stood on the edge, held Al's hands and helped him slide off into the water. It was almost neck deep. They paused a minute while the ceremony was read, and Al was pushed out of sight beneath the water.

When he came out, he looked and acted like he was nearly frozen, but when someone asked if he were cold, he said, "No, I hardly felt it."

I would be the last to say he did. Al was a perfectly sane and normal young man, practical and level headed far in advance of his years. But odd things happeded, and do happen, under the banner of religion.

Our Dunkard friends had more trouble than anyone else, beacuse they had to dip a candidate three times face foremost. In one of the protracted debates between ministers of different faiths, I heard their minister explain why they dipped a dandidate forward rather than backward. I am sure this is not in the Dunkard doctrine but it was in his argument. It seems that Eli, one of the Old Testament Judges, was killed by falling over backward and breaking his neck. What his had to do with baptizing I never figured out. Perhaps the only point was the danger in doing anything without seeing what fate has in store.

Their baptizings were great attractions. Probably the most spectaculer such event I ever attended, was a Dunkard ceremony involving a young woman I knew very well. She too picked a poor time for the conversion. Again it was winter, the streams hard frozen, and several inches of snow on the ground. On Saturday the weather turned warm and the snow began to melt. By Sunday afternoon, thirty inches of water was running in the creek near the school house on top of the still solid ice. It was decided the baptizing could be done there.

The girl was tall and fairly husky, about a hundred and fifty pounds. The preacher led her into that icy water until it was somewhat more than knee deep and persuaded her to kneel down. Then taking hold with firm resolution, he plunged her forward until she was fully submerged.

She came up screaming, choking and fighting, broke loose and ran out on the bank. She was freezing to death and scared to death. It took what seemed like ten minutes to persuade her to reenter the water. Finally she did so, but following the second dunking, the same scene in all it's violence and emotion was repeated. It took longer this time to get her back for the final dip . She finally yielded, but by this time, she must have felt the process was intended to go on all day, for after the third immersion, she dashed out and broke clear loose from everyone, running from the scene of he persecution, and her redemption, as fast as she could with her friends streaming along behind.

The Dunkards were certainly among our finest people. But to the majority of us, their ways were peculiar, extreme, and amusing. Aside from their baptismal ceremony, they had

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many other unusual customs. The women all wore the same queer little bonnets and the men's trousers all fastened on the side instead of in front. You didn't have to look twice to recogni ze a Dunkard. They kissed one another when they met in Church. The boys of the neighborhood were always tormenting the preacher with cahllenges that they would join the church if he would promise they could kiss all the girls when they attended services. But the old man was a fine, sweet-tempered gentleman, and he would just wave them away, always with a smile, and some such remark as, "Oh, you fellows are terrible, I can't do anything for you."

But what struck others as probably their queerest custom was their communion and footwashing ceremony. This was a re-ocurring program that program that had to be accomplished every so often. The membership would assemble around a large banquet table, but the meeting place, be it home, church or picnic grove, would be full of other people, all kinds of curious oome to see the show. None but the membership could take part, however.

When all was ready, they would rise and turn their backs to the table, the men on one side, women on the other. Then the man and woman at the head of the table would each take a basin of water and a towel and begin the foot-washing service on both sides, each washing the feet of the person next in line. The second person would then take the towel and basin and wash his neighbor's beet, and so on until the line had all been served.

This, for them, was a lesson in humility. But it always seemed to me that they took more pride in it than in anything else they did. When it was over, they would again sit at the table and eat their evening meal, taking plenty of time. Following this, the communion ceremony would be read, the elements would pass down the table and all would partake.

In all this, they were thoroughly sincere; it was a highly sacr ed and meaningful ceremony. To the crowd, it was mostly a show. I attended a few of these meetings but never felt quite right about it. Finally I told some of the boys I would not go anymore. They, of course, asked why. I told them these folks were sincere, but that I was not at all in sympathy with what went on; that unless I could feel the sacredness of the ceremony, I did not belong in attendance. So I did not go any more.

In religion there are different ways of classifying people and faith. It seems to me there is one fundamental principle which divides them into two great groups. The one puts the emphasis on obeying laws and performing deeds; the other on faiths, experiences, ideals and goals. Many of the oddities I have noted were characteristic of the first group, but the peculiarities of the second were just as bad.

I have attended meetings of Methodists, Presbyterians

Nazarines, P entecostals, Assemblies of God, Divine Healers, Salvation Army and many others. There were wildest shoutings and all-night prayer meetings reminiscent of the prophets of Bail; I have listened to wierd babblings in unknown tongues, I have seen many persons fall down in a trance and lie unconscious for hours. They called it falling under the spell of God. I saw a woman go stark crazy one night and refuse to go home umtil her husband, with the aid of several other men, put her in the wagon by force and held her there until they got home. And testimonials: Oh, my. How the Lord had answered prayer, stopped pain, healed disease, given instructions, and on and on.

There were, of course, sects which did not believe in musical instruments in the church, and others which were just choosey about the kind. To many, the violin or fiddle was an instrument of the dance, and thus of the Devil. I remember once when some special music was to be presented, and among other instruments brought in for use with the choir, was a base Viol. The preacher spotted it and immediately ordered that the fiddle be removed. Upon being assured that it was not a fiddle but a base Viol, he looked at it solemnly a few minutes and rendered his decision thusly; "That is just a big ungodly fiddle and I won't have it in my service".

Having recited all these manifestations of religious ferver, let me hasten to repeat I do so with the greatest respect for religion and the right of any individual to choose his own. And, after all, I was there, no smarter or better informed than most others at the time. Nor did I remain aloof and untouched. Far from it. The Christian religion, as I saw it, became my life. And it started right there among all those simple folk of whom I speak.

"A pebble in the streamlet scant had changed the course of many a river." Thus, it is with life, and so it was with mine. From a tiny beginning, a very small stream, it twists and meanders, ever working onward to the sea. Small events may have huge importance in shaping a human destiny.

I grew to manhood in Sumner County. My home environment was good and parental control well applied. I had never gone wild as had some of my friends and acquaintances, neither had I ever taken very seriously, the need and advantages of a religious faith. I was just another ordinary boy, worldly wise, self-centered to a degree, and self-important. I had heard religion talked all my life and professed by many, but it had never held a personal appeal for me.

The winter I was twenty-one I had given up school and was spending most of my time with my father hunting down in the Territory. One week-end we came home after having been out two or three weeks, and found the whole neighborhood

quite aroused over a religious meeting that was going on in one of the neighborhood school houses. It was not being conducted by any church, but by a cou;le of young women recently converted in a Salvation Army meeting in Wellington. These women were without authority from any church and had very little theological knowledge. But they were filled with a real enthusiasm based upon what they considered a very worthwhile personal experience of their own. They were going out into the country districts entirely on their own, because they thought they had a Christian message to bring to the people. Their highly evangelistic meetings were fairly "turning the neighborhood upside down." All kinds of people, with or without a faith, were interested and many had made religious professions.

Of course I was interested, for curiosity's sake, if nothing else, and started going to the meetings. About the third evening, I was there I arrived after the house was full and had to go far up front to find a seat.

There was no preaching, just singing and testimonials, and a little Bible reading. After a while, one of the women gave a short exhortation and made a call for penitents to come forward. This was a common procedure. In a few minutes several had come forward and the leader asked them to kneel for prayer. Everyone kneeled around me and they had crowded into all the aisles so that I could see no way to get out. So to get rid of myself as best I could, I knelt with them. The praying and singing and shouting went on.

After a little, someone knelt close beside me, put his hand on my shoulder and spoke to me. I liiked up and recognized Mr. Cushman, a neighbor well known to me. I think he was a Presbyterian. He asked what was on my mind, and I told him frankly and honestly, nothing at all, that I was just caught in the jam and was trying to keep out of the way as best I could.

He laughed but then began to talk to me about taking a definite stand for religion. The noise went on around us, but we paid it no mind and went on with our private talk for ten or fifteen minutes. It was a quiet and very serious conversation. I do not know how it happened, but I suddenly felt that maybe it was as good a time as any for me to do something and I told him so. He urged me to get up and tell the people that I was coming out on the Lord's side. After some hesitation, I did get up. I told that crowd that Mr. Cushman and I had been talking things over and I had decided that from then on, I was going to try to go by the Christian way- I went on to say, I was not professing any kind of conversion, that I was only going to try to trust in the Lord and be a Christian; that I hoped I would sometime know more about conversion.

I went home. There was no great reaction, no great light. In my mind was still the darkness. But I had been

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moved and that night I slept not at all. I tried to pray some. All the next day, the darkness was still with me. Several times I got out alone and tried more prayer. Each time I seemed to feel better. That evening I went to church and just as I entered the congregation, began to sing. It seemed to me most beautiful. A few simple choruses, a few testimonials. Gradually the darkness seemed to slip away, and I felt I stood in God's grace for the first time.

Before I knew it, I was standing up and saying, "Friends, it's been dark all day but now that is all gone. The light has come and I am happy."

Well, that was all. There was some emotion, yes. There was a very real experience, yes. Only a little thing. But a pebble had fallen into the stream of my life and it's course had been forever changed. There was a word for it Hallelulah. There has been no other.

Chapter XII

The Cherokee Strip

I have several times referred to the fact that my father liked to hunt. We can put fishing in the same category, and in Sumner County, we had considerable opportunity for both. I found that these sports held the same attraction for me, and one of the most important, and certainly one of the most looked forward to, milestones of my life, was the time he decided I was big enough to go on a real hunting trip.

Size was not the all important factor, really. I had been hunting without adult guidance since I was eleven. We boys roamed the country-side at will and learned to bring home our share and more, of small game. But, as explained elsewhere in this volume, we did have school, even in this raw, new country. And it never occurred to my parents, and apparently not even to me, that anytjing should come ahead of school. Unfortunately the short term we attended exactly co-incided with the major part of the hunting season. More than that, it covered the brief period in the winter when my father could be away from the farm, so for years, I suffered in silence, well-nearly, in silence, while preparations were in progress for an extended hunting trip, and as I watched the wagon slowly pull out of the yard in the grey dawn of departure morning.

Pa had some ideas about hunting not shared by all in the West, and, unfortunately, not shared by many in the present era of game scarcity. He drilled his philosophy into us boys and I think we learned it well. The important point was that, while he genuninely enjoyed the phase and any battle of wits with a creature of the wild, he never looked upon killing of game as just a way to while away his idle time, to have fun and spend money. He never shot, trapped or killed wantonly or without purpose. Rather, he felt his efforts were merely a means for increasing his efficiency in supporting himself and his family. Most modern sports-men will not agree with this and, indeed, it would be highly impracticable today, but for the time and place, I believe he was right, and I know he was thoroughly sincere. I always thought this attitude helped to make him truly a pioneer.

My father was always a poor man. Not until very late in life could it be said that he was even comfortably situated. I will not here attempt to develope reasons for this except to state that, having started with absolutely nothing following his return from the war, his family seemed always to increase faster than his income. He never could accumulate capitol for investment or trade and, thus, the economics of our family was generally a system of meeting today's needs today, sometimes tomorrow, in any way which presented itself. Any honest way, that is. That was one unvarying condition

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always attached to his enterprise and a restriction which sometimes, for the moment, appeared to be a serious obstacle to success.

Upon moving to the frontier, he found it almost impossible to ingage in gainful employment except in the development of his own property. And that development was always too slow for comfort. There were few opportunities in the new country for empolyment, and those which might have been available, did not permit of the improvement of a homestead as a hobby. And to give up the farm just was not in his nature. So he stayed, but he did find, within his own resources, a most welcome means of augmenting his income. And one which was doubly welcome because he derived such great pleasure from it.

This was the business of hunting. Wild game was generally plentiful and aside from the attraction it gave our own table, there was always a market for any surplus. He early found that he could nearly always solve any minor financial crisis with a hunting trip. There was neither law nor custom against the taking of game for commercial purposes and no public consciousness of the desirability of conservation. Yet I never knew a man more dedicated to the careful utilization of all game taken than was my father. So, while hunting to him was a sport and a pleasure, it was always, also, an important economic factor. It seems to me now that in those first years in Howard County, we all surely would have starved to death had it not been for Pa's gun.

I can remember, when I was very small, there would frequently be some little something we needed very badly and there would be not a dime in the house with which to purchase it. My father would take up his rifle and saunter off toward the store, two or three miles away. After a while, he would be back with the sugar, or salt, or matches or meal which we needed. Mother would ask how he got it, and he would say, "Oh, I picked up a rabbit on the way over." Or maybe it was a couple of squirrels or quail, or a turkey.

One fall after we had moved to Sumner County, it came time for school and I was the same as barefooted. There was no money for new boots. But one morning Pa was starting for Wellington for something, and he told me to climb into the wagon with him. He said he'd take his gun along and maybe we'd be lucky enough to shoot me some boots along the way.

We traveled by side roads as much as possible and took a good while for the trip. But when we got to town, we had eight prairie chicken. We went to the general store where the folks traded mostly. Mr Savage said the chickens were worth a quarter a piece that day and he pulled out the money drawer and laid two silver dollars on the table. Pa picked them up, then after a little remarked that he wanted

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to see if he could find something for my feet. They located a nice pair of boots that suited me fine and Pa asked the price. Mr. Savage replied, "Two dollars." Pa pulled the two dollars out of his pocket and handed them back. "I guess that will make us even all 'round, he said.

These were small things but they were important to us. And after he got to hunting regularlyfrom the Sumner County farm, the results were not always so small. The buffalo, of course, were gone, but other game abounded. There were even some antelope still on the prairies, and plenty of coyotes to sing their lonesome dirge through a starlit night. The Indian Territory south of us was the happy hunting ground for those who really liked to hunt.

With the first winter in Sumner County and the first good snow, Pa was off with a party of two or three other men, with wagon and team, down the Chikaskie River into the Territory for a hunt. That first trip was only fifteen or twenty miles and they were gone only three days. The luck was only fair, the game they brought back consisting primarily of about a dozen turkeys. But this was the beginning of a long series. The hunting remained good, the trips became longer and more serious events, and as we boys became old enough to participate, more and more exciting and important to the family as a whole.

One of the Walcher boys, ben, was for years my father's most faithful companion in the hunt. Older than I and less addicted to school, he got the jump on me by quite a little. I recall one trip the two of them made into the Territory when they spent two weeks and brought back three hundred and three prairie chickens. These netted well over a hundred dollars, good pay in those days. Another time the two of them brought in five antelope and six deer besides some turkeys. I do no recall just what this load of game brought them, but it meant big money for us.

But, as any hunter or fisherman well knows, results never are continuously good. Game may be plentiful and apparently there for the taking, but wind and weather and many an unforeseen circumstance are the allies of the wild, and man must be cunning indeed to come out ahead a majority of the time against all these adversaries.

The Chikaskia was a fine fishing stream too, and in summer we found the time, or stole it with Pa's tacit consent or active conniving, to recess from our well filled schedule of farm work long enough to spend a couple of days on the river and generally with good results.

We never marketed fish to any great extent, but, occasionally, when we had a surplus, some of us would peddle it on the streets of Wellington. There were always willing purchasers, though, of course, no one had quantities of money and the price was low. Then as now, most townspeople did

not hunt and fish, or did not know how to get results if they tried. But unlike today, there was little commercial shipment of such foods into the area, and people were hungry for game.

Venison was sold locally too, but generally through the stores. But there was a great demand back East for game birds and these were shipped to Kansas City or St. Louis when we had any quantity. Ducks were quick to spoil, turkeys almost as bad. Unless we could get these on the train almost at once, or unless the weather was unusually cold, they had to be sold locally or consumed at the family table. In our case, the latter was a constantly gapping maw down which almost any quantity of produce could be shoved.

The treatment of game to prevent spoilage was a simple but most important element in the business of hunting. Of course, no refrigeration was available. Early fall hunting had to be mostly for pleasure and home consumption, and an unusually mild spell during the season could wreck hav oc with a load of game whi h could not be disposed of quickly. On the other hand, any game properly handled could be made to last a surprisingly long time.

Venison, of course, was always drawn immediately and the meat left hanging in a tree while on the hunt, or in a cool shed at home. The skin was always left on until a given cut was being prepared for the table, thus affording the best possible protection for the meat. A spell of damp weather might make the walls of the body cavity slick after a few days, but a good washing in soda water would remove any hint of odor and the meat was as good as ever. Seldom could conditions be so bad that venison could not be marketed after two weeks.

Ducks and turkeys were best if drawn soon after being killed. If the weather was warm, we would stuff them with grass, preferably green, if it were not too late in the year to bind green grass. This was a standing practice with hunters and we never quite knew why. I am sure it helped to air out and thus dry the meat, which was helpful in preventing spoilage. But now that the beneficial bacteriological effects of chlorophyll have been discovered, I wonder if the green grass might also have retarded decay by distruction of the bacteria which caused it.

But the important game birds for the eastern market were quail and prairie chicken. These we would pack in barrels, which we always took along for the purpose. We straightened them carefully, handled them as little as possible, and laid them in the barrel on their breasts with the tail up. This forced the body content down against the breast where it caused no damage. But if turned up, the opposite way, the

thin skin of the abdomen would turn blue and develope an odor. This was the chief criterion used by the inspectors to grade the birds upon arrival.

A bird arriving in almost any condition still had some value. Some which had lain too long or had been shot too badly, would be rated soft or even spoiled. Soft birds could be cleaned and washed by the packing house so as to have almost the same market as prime birds, and spoiled ones were served in chraper restaurants in the cities, particularly among certain foreign populations. We never understood this, but I am told that even today in many European areas, game birds are not considered really edible until they are more than a little tainted.

The most important single element in preventing spoilage of game was to get it quickly and thoroughly cooled out after it was killed. If it could have a cold night, and it was spread out carefully and packed in the cool of the morning, we never had any worries about losing it.

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had to take full rations for ourselves and the teams. We intended to be about a hundred miles, quite a distance down stream to the east of the well-travelled Chisholm Trail. The trip was across open prairie with no trail at all, so travel was slow but we got to the timber the third night.

The weather had been pleasent for the trip, but it was mid-winter and that evening, as we hit the timber, a northern caught up with us. It was getting late and we had found no water for our camp, but it was decided we would have to stop or we would have to make camp in the dark as well as in a blizzard. W e found the best shelter we could, got a fire going and started preparations to weather the storm.

We had brought no tent, but the wagon sheets were to serve as a lean-to. Forked posts were driven into the ground, standing up some four and a half feet, forks up. Into these, we laid a ridge pole about sixteen feet long. Several other poles were laid across, one on the ridge pole the other resting on the ground some ten feet away. Over this skeleton of poles, the three canvasses were stretched, fastened end to end and staked down at the back and two ends of the lean-to. Before we had finished, it was dark and snowing. But we now had a good windbreak and roof. Those who have not had the experience of building such a camp in a blizzard may not recognize the pleasure in it. But it is there for those who can find it. The snug comfort it affords leaves one with a feeling of pride and satisfaction at having successfully met a challenge of nature.

Into the lean-to we moved all our camp gear and made our beds on the ground. We carried plenty of bedding and borrowed hay from the horses' food supply, so our sleeping was about as comfortable as it would have been at home. We had a wood fire about eight feet long across the open front and kept it going continously since there was no lack of fuel. Downed timber was everywhere about us. It was a most comfortable refuge. We prepared our supper, ate heartily and slept peacefully.

Next morning the ground was covered with about eight inches of snow and more was falling. We were pretty thoroughly snowed in, but no one seemed at all disturbed about it. Water had been a serious problem for us but now we had an adequate, if inconvenient, solution. We filled buckets with snow and set them in coals around the fire to convert some of the snow into a more useful form. Soon we had water, but six men and six horses, even in cold weather, require an amazing amount. The conversion process had to be kept up pretty steadily to keep all happy.

There was game all around but we could not do much about it. Some of us were in the woods trying most of the time but with disappointing results. The second day Pa got a

shot at a deer but struck it too far back in the body and failed to stop it. He trailed it all afternoon, hoping for another chance but never caught up. At dark he had to give up and return to camp. He and I were out early next morning to pick up the trail again, but we had little hope of success. Pa had seen many wolf tracks the evening before and he told me they would probably beat us to it.

We found the deer tracks where he had left off the night before, about a mile from camp. We had followed them only a couple of hundred yards when we discovered wolf tracks leading along in the same direction. "Uh ha: Just as I expected," Pa remarked as he pointed them out. "If there i s blood on a track, they will always do it."

And so we found it. In another quarter of a mile we came upon the spot where the little drama had been played out. There must have been at least a dozen of the wolves. They had padded the snow down hard over several square rods. In this area's center were the meager remains of our deer. It had been torn to pieces and every ounce of the flesh had been eaten, every bone picked clean. The hide, many of the smaller bones, and most of the head, were gone. So went our deer.

We spent four days in this camp. The weather stayed bad and so did our luck. A couple of miles away, and deeper into the timber, we found a little creek with running water. The melting of the snow was getting old to us so we moved the camp over to the creek. But still the hunting was poor. There were a good many quail along the creek and prairie chicken came in along the edges of the timber to eat acorns while the snow covered their other food. But the weather was so bad we could do little toward bagging them. A bird is wary in snow, knowing he has no natural protection. Some one finally killed two or three turkeys. But after some days here we moved again several miles west to a place called Little Turkey Creek near the Chisholm Trail, by which route we expected to return home.e Nothing seemed to change the weather or the hunting luck; a little small game, a few more turkeys, and it was time to start home.

But that did it. The very day we pulled out the warm up came. Temperatures had been below freezing since the storm hit. We went out for an early morning hunt, and it was noon before everyone was in and ready to break camp. There was a well known camping spot about twelve miles up the trail called Buffalo Springs. It was on the prairie but a small canyon broke away from the high plain westward toward Big Turkey Creek. There was water and some timber, as well as the shelter of the steep walls. We decided to camp there the first night on the but got started so late that night was upon us before we could get there. But the weather was much warmer with the snow melting rapidly, soww e continued on through the darkness.

A couple of miles before reaching our intended camp site, we came to a large pile of stones beside the trail. Some one noted it and another of the men said it was the Hennessey grave. It was already late but we stopped the wagon and got out. While we stood there in the cool, starlight night, someone of the party who knew it, told us the story.

A few years before, a convey of government freight wagons was moving down the trail toward Ft. Sill. A teamster, Pat Hennessey, who was handling the rear outfit, had allowed his team to fall back a little, from carelessness or cause no one ever knew, and a considerable distance had developed between him and the rest of the wagons ahead. Unexpectedly and without warning, there broke from a ravine near the road and just ahead, a band of Indians in full war paint and feathers. Hennessey immediately took all possible means to defend himself; grabbing his rifle, he jumped behind a wagon and returned the attacker's fire. Several Indians were tumbled from their horses and the party wheeled and dashed out of range. Then began the customary circling with yelling and shooting and individual dashed toward the improvised fort to draw fire and demonstrate the bravery of the warrior. After a time, Hennessey's ammunition was gone and they closed in, killed and scalped him, took of his gear what they could carry away, shoved his wagons together, threw his body on the heap and set it afire.

The drivers ahead had heard the firing and, realizing what had happened, wheeled their wagons into the best cover they could find and watched the battle from too great a distance to be of help. That they did not return immediately to his assistance was due to the fear that additional Indians were lurking about to plunder the rest of the wagons. After it was over they did return and found the ruins. What they could find of Pat Hennessey's remains, they took from the pyre and burried there by the trail, covering the grave with stones to prevent it's desecration by coyotes.

I was but a boy and this story, told there in the darkness beside the trail, of an older west that was almost gone, impressed me strangely. But many years later when I passed that way again, I felt that same powerful emotion. I lived again the aloneness and dispair which must have been Hennessey's as he faced and defied the merciless horde. That night I sat in a hotel room and wrote the following as a tribute and memoriam to a brave man.

Poem

It was winter; the prairies were covered with snow,
Gray skies overhead, the clouds hanging low.
The old Chisholm Trail stretched away out of sight
As we plodded along through the dusk of twilight.

And there by the trail was a heap of rough stones,
Underneath it a pile of cold human bones.
And they told me the tale as we stood there that night.
A wild tale, but true, of a freighter's last fight.

How, caught in the trap of the Indians one day,
Cut off from his comrades and there brought to bay,
He had fearlessly faced them with only his gun,
And had fought to a finish with twenty to one.

His rifle was terror, it seemed to spit death,
And man after man was stopped quiet by its slaughter;
Nor could they come near 'til his powder was gone
Then they rushed, and scalped, burned him and wildly
went on.

As I stood there, the north wind blew cold in my face,
A strange, mystic spell seemed to circle the place.
From a hill not far off, rose a coyote's clear bark
An owl's chatter near seemed to shatter the dark.

Then a light's glory light: from the sky, from the ground
Seemed to hang in the air and to spread all around
And a voice of a spirit spoke loud in my ear,
"Dost thou see? Dost thou know? Oh man, canst thou hear?

It is glory to stand, any time, any where,
And fight against odds that another won't dare.
And to keep up the conflict as long as you can,
Then go down if you must, but go down like a man."

My hunting trip had been a poor one. But, boy that I was, in experience and training, and knowledge of the West, it had been rich.

The above story, in general, was typical of hunting trips of the day, but they differed greatley in detail. And in results, because some were much more successful from the standpoint of game taken. And all were very interes t- ing to us young-sters. I remember particularly the one during which I killed my first deer .

Pa was planning a trip with an old gentleman from Wellington by the name of Lamb. Mr. Lamb had two nephews visiting him from someplace back east and he wanted to give the boys a real outing. He knew my father's weakness and hit him up about a hunt.

The boys were grown, somewhat older than I, but had lived in town and were thorough tenderfeet. That term does not necessarily mean "softie", which they were not, but it does mean inexperienced and that they certainly were. But they were highly enthusiastic. So, also, was I when Pa agreed to take me along. The preparations and equipment were about as usual except that the Lambs had a tent in which we could all sleep. Our fire, cooking and eating, however, would con- tinue to be out in the open.

It was near the end of January with the weather mild

but cloudy and foggy much of the time. Fine for getting lost, which we did sometimes, but not seriously. The woods had been burned over during the winter and were very bare and open. Deer were plentiful but wild, wary and very hard to approach. There were droves of turkeys but they were wilder than the deer. With no grass and little brush to hide us, they seemed to see us from the other side of the hill. Results were almost nil. The town fellows shot and shot, making plenty of noise but killing nothing. Pa and I knew why, nothing was ever within killing range. We did no better but at least we did not waste our ammunition.

Of course, we picked up a quail or squirrel or prairie chicken now and then, but we just could not get closer to the game. But one morning Pa and I took east and the Lamb boys west to try again. We soon separated. Pa and I always hunted separately but tried to keep within calling distance in the event one should need the other. Nothing happened until mid-morning when I sighted a deer down in the flat in front of me. There was open timber between and almost level ground, a sorry prospect for getting close enough for a shot.

As I watched, I saw several other deer standing around or getting up and laying down again. I saw they were resting not feeding. I was lying flat on the ground and had not been seen and the wind was right. I began to maneauver, keeping the best possible screen between me and the deer. Lying as flat as I could and moving very slowly, I think I was an hour getting a hundred yards closer. I had reached the very last tree that seemed available as a blind and was lying there on my stomach, my rifle out in front wondering what next, when a deer got up and walked out into the open, stopping broadside to me. I decided I would not get a better chance. Three seconds and I had touched the trigger. No buck-fever for me; or was I too excited to notice?

Deer jumped up all around, dashed over a ridge and were gone. There must have been twenty-five or more. I rose to my feet, but I was using a single shot, muzzle loading rifle and could not fire again. I stood there and loaded my gun, then stepped off the distance to where my deer had stood when I shot. I found the four tracks just ninety-one long steps away.

From the way the hoofs had torn into the ground when the deer jumped, I felt almost sure I had not missed. I followed the trail over the ridge about a hundred yards and there he lay. I had killed my first deer. My shot had been not quite perfect, about two inches high, but good enough.

I whistled and called for Pa but got no response. During my approach to the game, he had drifted away and I was alone several miles from camp and with a job to do which I had never undertaken before.

The deer was a buck which had just dropped his horns, so I could not tell his age. But he weighed at least a hundred and twenty-five pounds. I knew what to do but it was not easy. I must have spent two hours taking care of my game. I opened him up, drew him, rolled up the liver and heart to take with me, and hung him in a tree. The last was quite a chore. He had to go high enough to be safe from the coyotes, and he seemed awfully heavy to me. I wasn't much bigger than that myself.

I marvel now at my short-sightedness in bringing with me nothing with which to hang my kill. Later, we learned to carry a rope. We tied it around our waists on the outside of our coats and it served as a wind-stop. I suppose Pa never dreamed I'd kill a deer, or at least he never expected me to do it alone and have to hang it without his help. At any rate, I was stranded with only my belt and hunting knife as useful tools for the job.

I knew a deer had to have his throat cut in order to bleed properly. I also knew Pa always utilized this cut, or rather cuts, to insert a short stick, which, when laid across to branches with the deer's head in the crotch behind, served as an ideal support to suspend the animal in the tree. But how to get him there? I cut sticks of varying lengths and set him up on his haunchs, bracing body and head with the poles on all sides. I then put my belt around his neck under the hanging stick, got into the tree, reached down for the belt and pulled. I had selected a tree with low hanging limbs and I gradually hitched him up, limb by limb with rest periods in between, until I thought his hind feet were out of reach of the coyotes. I finally got his head and hanging stick into the crotch I had selected and left him. It was a pretty good hanging job, but I had spent oh, so long at it. It was near night when I got back to camp.

The rest of our stay was without further good luck and it became time to start home. The Lamb wagon loaded up and started early. Pa and I decided to have a last fling for deer, for a couple of hours before we started planning to catch them in camp that night.

We got out at daylight and tramped until the sun was a couple of hours high. We were about ready to call it off, when we saw some deer quite a distance away in a brushy bottom There was a little ridge running part way down into the flat and by getting on the back side of this, we could work a good deal closer to them. So we began the approach, manuevering a long time. We were about t the end of the ridge when six or eight deer rose suddenly to their feet in plain view. We watched them a few minutes and Pa whispered "they are getting uneasy, I suspect this is our chance." Our rifles were ready, we took a few seconds to draw a bead, he counted

three and we squeezed both triggers. Deer jumped up everywhere, it looked like there were fifty of them. It was a long shot, about a hundred and fifty yards, but one deer was dead on the ground and we soon found signs that another had been wounded.

We followed that trail the rest of the day without getting a shot. Then near sundown, we came suddenly upon the deer where it lay in the brush. It refused even to try to get up, being completely exhausted from lossoof blood. We did not even have to shoot again.

Pa was shooting a Sharpes rifle. Upon examination of both deer, we decided his bullet had killed both and I had missed. The wound of the Sharpes bullet was different to that of my round ball. We cut the bullet from the wounded deer, it would have gone on through had it's force not already been spent in passing through the first one.

It had cost us an extra day, and we did not try no b break camp until the next morning. But the last day had turned out to be the best one, and we were well satisfied to spend the extra time.

Missing pages —
91, 92, 93, 94, 95

Beginning of Chapter 9
Westward - The March
of Empire

90 & 96

started we got a freezing rain, and when we got on the road, we found the ground was very rough, very hard and very, very slick. By the time we reached South Hav en, only five miles, Pa had decided we could never get anywhere unless the team had sharp shoes. So there was nothing to do but kill time for about half a day in South Haven while the team was being shod. We soon were glad we had done so.

In a short while after starting out again, we came to the ford of the Chikaskia River. It was covered with ice as clear and slick as glass. We examined it and thought it would hold. As we drove out on to the slick ice, it was a perfectly beautiful sight to see how steady and sure the team walked in the new sharp shoes.

But as we moved out toward the stream's center, the ice became thinner and the tires of the wagon wheels cut through. Pulling against the edge of the ice created more load for the team, thus causing them to break through also. We were stuck in the ice and less than half way across.

The water was only about knee deep. Pa unhooked the team's traces, took up the lines and told them to go. They climbed out on to the ice and he circled them back toward the bank from which we had just come. They broke through some but Pa could circle away and thus stay on top of the ice himself.

But now, we had to get out axes and cut a roadway through the ice to the opposite bank. This took an hour or more. There we had a steep ice covered hill to climb and were not sure the team could make it with the loaded wagon. But there was nothing to do but try. With considerable difficulty, we got the team back to the wagon and hitched, got in and started. Ane here again, we discovered the wisdom of the new shoes; the horses walked right up the icy hill with never a slip or hesitation.

Now it was almost night and we had made little progress. We did push on to a little creek a few miles ahead to camp for the night. We continued on to the Jack Oaks country without further incident.

we got out early our first morning for a quick deer hunt, though we had come down expecting to hunt mostly for prairie chicken. We wandered around sev eral hours and were on our way in toward camp when a doe and two fawns jumped out from a thicket where they had been resting. They disappeared quickly into the brush but scattered and one of the fawns cut back toward me. It came into the clear at close range for an easy shot, and I killed it. That gave us fresh venison for awhile and put us in pretty good spirits.

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For several days, we moved slowly eastward along the edge of the timber, hunting for chickens but the luck was not good. The weather had turned mild after the ice storm and the game was staying out on the open prairie. We tried for a deer a short time each morning without success.

We arrived at a favorite spot we had camped before, and often did afterwards. Here a wedge shaped point of grassland more than a mile long extended into the north edge of the timber. Since our moving hunt was getting no where, we decided to stop here a few days and see if anything better would happen to us. We camped on the west side of the meadow down near the point. We found lots of deer sign across on the east side.

In the morning we went over there early and worked north along the edge of the timber for about a mile without sighting game. We had become separated and I did not know just where Pa was. I decided to circle to the west and work back toward camp.

I had just started across the open meadow, when I walked into a couple of deer lying in the grass. They jumped out not thirty yards away and I had a clear, easy shot. But something happened to me that had never happened before. The sudden and unexpected appearance of game startled me into a panic so that I threw up the gun and pulled the trigger without looking or thinking. Instantly, I knew I had not shot at the deer at all but at least six feet over them. I tried to collect myself and finally fired the other barrel, but by that time, the deer were too far away for me to do them any damage.

I never felt so chagrined. For days I had been looking and hoping for just such a chance. Now it had come and I had muffed it. I reloaded my gun, feeling pretty awful, but there was nothing I could do about it. I whistled several times for Pa. After a bit, he answered from a few hundred yards away and I waited for him to come up. I told him my sad story, and while he hated as much as anyone, to see game get away, he had a good laugh at my expense.

While we were talking, we say a couple of deer trotting along through the edge of the timber west of us. We say them coming somewhat towards us, so we just sat down and waited. They were a pair, an eight point buck and a dow. They were going no place in particular and high ground between hid them from us for a while. But we judged they would be closer when we saw them again so we continued to sit. In a little while, we saw the horns of the buck come up over the ridge northwest of us about seventy-five yards away. A few steps more and his whole body was above the ridge.

Suddenly Pa said, "Ba" just loud enough for the sound to carry to the deer. He stopped short and threw up his head. I saw that Pa's rifle was pointed at him, though I

had neither seen nor heard him move. Now he continued to sit, as still as a stump, and I thought the shot would never come. Finally it did and with one jump the deer was again out of sight behind the ridge; the doe had never come into view and I got no shot.

Pa stood there and calmly renewed the charge in his muzzle-loading rifle. I watched him. Both of us were smiling though I was a bit irritated as I asked, "Well, why did you wait so long to touch the trigger?" His answer has stayed with me always, "Oh, There w as no hurry. There's always time to draw a good bead." My next question, "Do you suppose you hit him?" "Oh, I suspect so, I meant to," was all he would say.

With the gun duly administered to, we walked to the knoll where the deer had stood, picked up the trail and followed it to where he had died some seventy-five yards across on the other slope. The shot had been directly through the heart.

We hung him in a tree and started toward camp. We crossed the b ase of the meadow intending to hunt back through the timber. We had gone but a short distance, had not yet separated for the hunt, when we noticed the smell of smoke. Looking out over the prairie to the northeast, we saw the grass was on fire. It was quite a distance away but a strong north wind, we knew, would have it upon our camp very shortly.

It was about a mile away from us and we took out as fast as we could go. Pa thought his bones creaked worse than mine, so he sent me on to see if I could make it alone ahead of the fire. I didn't quite do it, but luck was with us or we would have lost everything. The head fire passed me a hundred yards before I reached the camp, but the angle of the wind caused it to pass a hundred and fifty yards to the east. The side fire came in slowly, and I had time to reach the camp ahead of it and start backfiring. As soon as possible, I began moving camp gear into the burned area I had created. Pa arrived in a few minutes, bringing the team which had been lariated out on the grass and which I had passed up, seeing that the head fire was going by them. We hitched them quickly to the wagon, loaded our camp stuff and drove out through the timber to the northwest away from the fire. There was nothing we could do to stop it and we were thankful that luck had favored us. We circled far out over the burned prairie to our deer, picked him up and turned back toward the west to establish another camp several miles up stream.

The weather continued warm and our luck mediocre as we worked back for several days toward the trail for home. Our allotted time was gone and feed and grub was low. We

had decided to start home the next day. We went to bed in the mildest of weather, but when I awoke just before dawn, sleet was beating on the tent cloth. Pa was already up and had a good fire burning before the tent door. He stood before the fire studying the weather, and when I made some movement so that he knew I was awake, he remarked, "Well, Jesse, I guess you had better look out and see the sights, we've got something this morning."

I sat up and asked, "What's up." "A norther, that's all. It don't look good for starting home." Well, what can we do," I asked. "I don't just know," was all he would say then. I began to dress.

He poked up the fire a little, stood up beside it and finally said, "this is an awfully fine morning to catch a deer. I believe we better get our breakfast, take our guns get out here in the woods today and kill two or three deer. By tomorrow this storm will let up some and the chickens will have drifted into the timber. We will get out tomorrow and pick up a couple dozen chickens. By the next day, it will probably be decent enough to start home."

"What about the feed for the horses," I asked. "Well I think we can pick up somehting for the team up here at Bull Food Ranch. I think we will risk it anyway."

So our decisions were reached and in another hour, we had eaten our breakfast, bundled ourselves up well and were in the woods. For a time nothing happened; the storm kept on and the sleet kept falling. We had separated but had not gone far . Mostly we were just watching. We had been out about an hour and a half when I heard Pa's rifle crack. I stood still a moment, looking and listening. Crack, another shot from the same place. But I knew that a single-shot muzzle-loading rifle could not repeat so quickly. I was pondering this puzzle when shortly for the third time, I heard that well-known crack. "What the heck." I thought, and now I made my way coutiously, but as rapidly as practicable, over to the origin of the sounds to find out what was happening.

I found Pa making preparations to hang an old doe he had just killed. While we both worked quickly, he gave me the story. He had come upon the doe and two fawns without being seen. His first bullet had caught the doe high on the shoulder and she had dropped in her tracks. But curiously the fawns had not run away, and here even Pa had lost his composure. He knew full well that a ball without patching would not travel true, but he took a chance and rammed one into his gun naked. He shot at one of the fawns and got a clean miss. But still they did not run, so once again, more excited now than the first time, he loaded without patching and tried again. This time the fawns did disappear, but he thought he had done some better, at least, the bullet seemed

to have struck the target some place. We got the doe hung up as quickly as possible and set out to look for a trail.

We found it, and judged from the blood and tracks, that the deer was seriously wounded. It took about an hour to trail it down, but we found it and made the capture without further shooting. The sleet was still falling but we separated again to carry on with the hunt. It was only a short time before I heard Pa's rifle again and I stopped, thinking, "Gee, he's having all the luck." I was in the timber but close on my left lay an open flat, just a few scattered trees and tall grass. The shot had come from the timber on the other side. As I waited and watched for a few minutes, a large buck with immense antlers, came out into the open and kept on until almost within range of my gun. But he stopped, turned around a couple of times and laid down in the grass. I knew then it was a wounded deer.

I hardly knew the next move, but I had not long to contemplate it, for Pa appeared at the far side of the meadow, moving slowly along the deer's trail. I exposed myself until he saw me and by signs, I indicated the deer's location. He peered intently for awhile and finally located the antlers out in the flat between us. By maneuvering behind a tree, he was able to creep up close to where it lay and shoot it through the head. It was a fine specimen and our third for the day, so we quit and made our way to camp.

The next morning, sure enough, the storm had gone, an d a good many prairie chickens had come in. Everything was working out just as Pa had planned it before the campfire in the cold, grey dawn. We killed twenty-five that day, and the following morning, started for home.

Our trip at the last had turned out well, but of more importance, I had learned three valuable lessons which I always remembered. I can state them briefly, thus; When beginning any new endeavor, it pays to get as ready as you can before you start. Even if you must wait half a day to get your horses shod.

When an important condition arises and the moment for quick decision and precise action is at hand, nearly always "there is time to draw a good bead." When in a jam, it is better to stand still and look than to stampede; nearly always there is a way out. To use a gambler's expression; "there is generally a card still in the deck which will fill your hand."

to have struck the target some place. We got the doe hung up as quickly as possible and set out to look for a trail.

We found it, and judged from the blood and tracks, that the deer was seriously wounded. It took about an hour to trail it down, but we found it and made the capture without further shooting. The stag was still fighting but we separated again to carry on with the hunt. It was only a short time before I heard Pa's rifle again and I stopped, thinking, "Dee, he's having all the luck." I was in the timber but close on my left lay an open flat, just a few scattered trees and tall grass. The shot had come from the timber on the other side. As I waited and watched for a few minutes, a large buck with immense antlers, came out into the open and kept on until almost within range of my gun. But he stopped, turned around a couple of times and laid down in the grass. I knew then it was a wounded deer.

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Chapter XlV

Them was characters

The heart of a community, the basic and overall nature of the whole, is the sum total of the natures of all it's people. "All it's people" means predominately the solid citizens, the rank and file, the little people who comprise the vaste majority of it's membership.

But a great influence, albiet a less fundimental one, if almost invariably present in the persons of a few individuals who, by virtue of some outstanding characteristic, mental, physical or spiritual, stand out from the group. Such individuals may set a pattern for good or for evil, or they may only make people laugh. They can be successful leaders of business or industry, or they can be the most ignorant and humble among their fellows. But some spark of individuality sets them apart and makes of each a person to excite the emotions far in excess of the norm. Such persons have been called many things. Since those of us who lack a special spark are likely to be jealous of those who have it, some of those things are not at all complimentary. Fame, or prominence, or notoriety likely carry with them a corollary of spite. But for simplicity's sake, and for the neutrality of feeling, the word connotes, I shall just call such persons "characters."

Having attempted to present herein, a picture of the frontier in Sumner County as I knew it, I feel that that picture would not be complete without some special mention of a few of it's "characters." These are the individuals who stick in one's memory and thus, I hope, are those which be of interest to others.

About three hundred yards north, on the farm across the road from ours, there lived such a person. His name was Crocket Barringer. On the face of, Mr. Barringer was not a bad sort. In fact, he was a very good neighbor, most of the time. Under normal circumstances, he was friendly and helpful, would lend, or borrow, anything, and do a neighbor any good turn that might present itself.

He lay claim to being a complete atheist. He believed in no God, no Hell, no future life. But this was a personal thing with him and not a fetish at which he worked. He did not impose it upon others nor attain any particular notoriety on account of it. But he did possess a faculty which puts him into my character classification, and perhaps, it was a result of his convictions.

His distinction was that he could out-cuss anybody who ever came into his circle of acquaintance, or into mine. I am sure he must have died the undefeated champion. For bitter, nasty, ungramatical and completely unreasonable, and meaningless profanity, I am sure he could never have had

Chapter XIV

Three more characters

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an equal. He could fly into an angry passion toward a horse, a hog, a cow or a neighbor and cut loose with both barrels with every profane word ever conceived, put together in such fantastic manner that, to anyone able to view the situation, dispassionately, it would have been highly comical except that it was so disgusting. Folks used to say the air on such an occasion would turn blue and to anyone near,a distinct odor of burning sulphur and brimstone was in evidence. I would not swear that I ever personally experienced these latter sensations, but I do know, from experience, that he could really put on a terrible show.

The natural assumption would be that such carryings on would precipitate personal combat several times a week. But such was not the case. He seemed always to get away with it. People who knew him just joked ablut it, and his friends must have excused him to others to the extent that he never suffered serious retaliation. They would say, "Oh, Crocket just had one of his tantrums," and let it go at that.

Everyone referred to it as "tantrums". When we children were young, we got the idea from listening to people talk, that a tantrum was just a necessary evil that could happen to anyone, and the best thing to do was to disregard it. This, of course, was not a healthy attitude, and I suspect my mother, and many another mother among our neighbors, suffered considerably by having permitted children the luxury of feeling that a tantrum on their parts, was occasionally in order.

Since he was our close neighbor, and since fences were not always adequate, it was inev itable that one of our cows or hogs should sometimes wander into his crops. At such times, Pa was sure to be in for a long, blasphemous lecture. The man was too shrewd to come right out and call a person names or make accusations to the extent that an honorable man would feel called upon to make retribution. But his language was non the less violent, as he would tear into shreds, the character of cows or hogs as the case might be, in general, the involved individual in particular, and indirectly, and with freat finess, the owner of any such depraved animal. He was a master at putting the other party in the wrong so as to reduce through a sense of guilt, his will to resist the tirade. So Pa, as did everyone else, tried to passify him on such occasions, accepted the responsibility, and let him get away with his abuse.

I never knew of but one occasion when someone really called his hand, while he was without a peer in the use of foul and abusive language, he did meet his match in shrewd and forceful vituperations.And this time he took it without opening his mouth, just as his family and neighbors had been forced to do for years.

Mr. William Lingenfelter, "Bill Link" to all who knew

him, was quite a character in his own right. He had been my first teacher at the Clarksville school I had first attended in Sumner County before the Illinois School was built. Bill Link and Crocker Barringer had some words at a political meeting one day. Nothing serious or particularly disturbing, but enough to warn Bill that a tantrum was fuilding up. He decided he would nip it in the bud. He suggested that they go outside and talk things over. Bill was about six feet five, all man and a yard wide. He plopped barringer down on a stump and told him to stay there. He then gave the man such a verbal dressing down as our community had never seen or heard before. Bill was a master of the English language and of verbal belittlement. I had learned this years before as his pupil. He never raised his voice or used language he could not have used with propiety in church. But many a recalcitrant boy squirmed under a reprimand more devastating then corporal punishment. And so did Crocket Barringer on this occasion. He heard how mean he was to his family and neighbors, how inexcusable was his verbal conduct, what a detriment it was to himself and to his community. He found himself bemeaned by a bemeaner who put his own brand to shame. He took it all without a word.

No, it did not cure Crocket. But it must have given even his encrusted nature cause for reflection.

Bill Link was an intellectual and for this reason alone, an unusual personality on the frontier. I do not know what degrees he held, but I do know he had atten ded college and was inherently far too big a man for the pittance paid to a country school teacher. He gave it up after three or four years, but he liked us and decided to settle down with us. Or, perhaps, he stayed because he married a local girl At any rate , he took up a farm nearby and became an outstanding leader in all community affairs.

For many years he was on the county board for examination of school teachers, thus, continuing his interest in and influence over education. He often was called upon for help by less qualified teachers. He was particularly well grounded in mathematics and there was no problem, or so we thought, which could stump him. I well recall one occasion on which our teacher was unable to arrive at the answer, given in the back of the book, to a problem in the text. After several days of going over it in class and at home, he had come to the conclusion that the book's answer was wrong. Then it happened that Bill Link stopped in to visit the school one day while the matter was still fresh in all our minds. The teacher asked if he would try to solve it. Probably he would not have asked it had he been less sure that he was right and the book wrong.

So Bill sat down with a student, borrowed his slate, and in a few minutes, announced that he seemed to have the answer. The problem involved a long series of numbers separated by marks of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, and I learned a principle that day which I

never forgot. The teacher learned it too. Both of us should have known it years before, but who was there to tell us? I learned that multiplication and division are methods of operation and must be performed first; that addition and subtraction are methods of combination and must follow. Attacked thus, the problem became perfectly simple and the answer checked as a matter of course.

Bill Link later was urged by his friends to run for the State Legislature. He was not enthusiastic nor optimistic about winning. He was a firm Democrat in a hide-bound Republican district, and it idi not occur to him to compromise his principles for the sake of being elected. So he ran as a Democrat. He told his constituents he was a Democrat and would act like one if elected. On the other hand, he stated his principles frankly and honestly and everyone knew that, regareless of politics, he would stand upon them. He was elected and reelected several times. He commanded the respect of everyone with whom he worked and served us well in Topeka.

About a mile west of us lived a man named Jeff Ogden. For some time he worked around for various farmers and lived where he worked. Then he bought a little farm and lived alond for several years. He finally married and became a stable enough member of the community. But he was a rough sort, though a vastly different type from Crocket Barringer. He was the happy-go-lucky kind, never out of temper, always friendly and likeable. He had been around some, had seen a good deal of the United States, and was considerably better informed than most folks in the community, though with little formal education. In this respect, he was a great source of information to our younger set because he combined with his knowledge, a great gift for story telling. It may well be that the stories were not always based entirely on fact, but they were none the less interesting for that.

He was very sociably inclined and got along well with the older folks, men and women, as well as being a sort of hero to us boys. But none of these things made him the sort of character which should stay in my memory forever. His great attribute, in my view, was his singing. I suppose now a days he would be on the radio as a hillbilly or western star He was born too early. He had no opportunity to be anything but a country bumpkin who liked to live happy, and who did more than his share to make those around him live the same way. And while his audience was thus limited, he was just as well loved by all who knew him as though it had been nation-wide.

He was a ballad singer. He must have known every one ever written, and I suspect some he made up as he went along. He never got tired and he never ran out of songs.

Jeff made the rounds of the neighborhood, as many of us

younger boys did upon coming of age, working in season for all the farmers at haying, threshing and all such jobs which required extra hands for a short time. Whenever work stopped for any reason, and often in the midst of it, Jeff would be singing. The men would gather around for a few minutes relaxation and he would entertain the crowd as long as time permitted. Everyone enjoyed listening. He made frequent fishing trips with us down the Chikaska in the Territory. I have ridden back with him, fifteen or twenty miles in the wagon under the stars, with Jeff singing almost continously all the way.

He was a great favorite with children and would sit and tell them stories or sing them songs for hours on end. He generally had his pockets full of peanuts and would solemnly explain he gathered them from the corn field nearby. Or he would have some equally fantastic tale with which to confuse and regale them; and to make them laugh.

To be sure, a good many of his songs were not acceptable in all gatherings; he was not quite so versatile in singing before a mixed crowd. It is quite true that many of his songs should not have been sung before any crowd. But it took all kinds to make up Jeff Ogden. The community would have been different without him. It might have been better in some respects; on the whole, I think it would have suffered

There was a Mr. L. Burdick, who lived eight or ten miles south of us down near the state line. I think I should call him a character. He, of course, was not of our immediate neighborhood, but he played an important part in it as we shall see in a moment.

He had come out to Sumner County about the time we did and was then a man past fifty. He was a farmer like most of the rest of us and had a family. I know nothing of his origin or his life before. I know he was quite a hunter and a pretty good hand at the open end of a whiskey bottle.

He was a successful hunter and an excellent rifle shot. I do not believe any of us ever hunted with him, but we not infrequently ran into each other down in the Jack Oaks country He was a terriffic liar bout his hunting and we often entertained ourselves on the way home from such an encounter, sifting over his stories and conjecturing as to the parts which might have some basis in fact.

A couple of these tales I remember. On one occasion he reported to us that he had been hunting prairie chicken and was armed only with a shot gun and bird shot, when a fine buck presented itself, running rapikly away, of course. Knowing he could not kill such game with birdshot in any normal way, he took careful sim and let fly at his hind legs with the intention of stopping him by breaking them below the knee. Both legs would have to be broken to get results. The

shot was, of course, successful and the game was bagged.

But he did not always brag of his accomplishments. Once we met him after he had had a long hunt in the snow, he had had little luck and by way of emphasizing the reason for it, explained he had been snow blinded. His sight was so bad that he had taken seventeen standing shots at deer in one day without scratching a one. We might have believed the snow blindness but no on e could have expected us, experienced hunters as we were, to believe he could have been able to get seventeen chances in one day at standing deer, I'll never know. Chronic liars often are so illogical as to make themselves rediculous.

My first recollection of Mr. Burdick is in connection with a Christmas turkey shoot at South Haven. My father took great pride in his ability with a rifle and liked to prove it on such occasions. He also took great pride in his rifle. It was already old then, a typical long barreled, muzzle-loading squirrel rifle, he had brought out from Ill. But, partially because it's riflings were worn and partially beaause a larger ball was needed for killing deer, he had it bored out and re-rifled after he came to Kansas.

Bringing home the turkey was not the least consideration since a big family had to eat. This time he took some of us boys along to watch the fun, and since he had no money, figured on killing some prairie chicken on the way down to pay his entry fees. By Christman time, of course, a farmer had no cash, the necessities of life being acquired through credit at the general store.

He did succeed in killing three chickens and they sold for a dime apiece when we got to town. A chance to shoot cost a dime, so he now had the wherewithall to enter three contests. From seven to ten shooters wook part in each shoot with a turkey going to the winner.

And there I saw Mr. Burdick for the first time. He stood out from the crowd because he was the only shooter who accepted the option of shooting freehand at forty yards in lieu of prone at sixty. Nearly all hunters agreed that the latter gave one a better chance for a close shot but some few men, in a spirit of braggadocia, would shoot from the optional position.

Well, Pa won the first shoot with a shot less than a half inch from the center of the target, a white paper about three inches square with black diagonal lines to mark the center. He always gave credit to his gun first and himself second, and there was an immediate deluge of requests from other shooters to borrow it. Jim Hale used it and won a turkey, then Bill Link and one or two others.

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When Pa spent his second dime and fired again himself, he missed by four inches. Again he tried and again he missed, over in the same spot to the right of center. Others tried with the same result. It became obvious that something had happened to the gun. It won no more turkeys that day. Pa could scarcely wait to get home to check it out. He corrected the error by tapping the site back into position. Someone at the shoot had watched for an opportunity and hit the site with something just hard enough to move it ever so little That gun, not to mention it's owner, was too much competition. Pa always believed it was Burdick who did it, but there was no way to prove it. Whether or not he was guilty, it was the kind of thing that would have been in character.

But I.L. Burdick had another, and better, side that made him a person to remember. His claim to fame lay in his fiddling. After coming to the frontier, he rapidly developed a wide acquaintance and a great demand for his services. He too, was a happy sort, well liked and a born showman. He fiddled and danced, and called for square dances all around the country. I think he seldom was paid for his services, and certainly never very much. It was mostly just for the fun of it. He liked people and he liked the ex citement of the party, and he liked fiddlin'.

He always enjoyed himself and he tried to see that everyone else did. He could spin a yarn with the best of them, also. He talked freely and, since he held truth in light regard, his talk and stories were unimpaired by it's restrictions. He was actually a pretty rough, tough and wicked man. But he seemed to be able to fit himself into most any kind of crowd and c ould always add considerably to the life and fun of the occasion. I have sometimes wondered why he should remain so vivid in my memory. I believe now that the real reason, and the characteristic that really set him apart from others, was the fact that he was one of those rare individuals who go on living their boyhood all their lives. Merely to say that he had never grown up does not cover the situation. That expression aften connotes mental or spiritual immaturity of an unfavorable or unpleasant nature. In his case it was just the fact that the exub erance, the relaxation, the freedom and spirit of youth never left him. At sixty, or seventy, the boy in him was still larger than the man.

I have mentioned Bobby Summerville before. But to leave him out of this lineup of characters would be truly a gross mis-direction of thought. He definitely belongs here.

He lived about half a mile away, Everyone always called him "Old Bobby Summerville" though I don't believe anyone ever knew just how old he was. His perfectly white hair and whiskers made him look a hundred to us boys. He was small and wiry. He always toddled about on foot, I think he never owned a horse.

Though he owned his little farm, he seemed always to make his living by working for the other farmers and his frail appearance was belied by the results of his labor. He was the local expert in the stacking of hay and all kinds of grain. He could build a good stack, one that stood up against wind and animals and that turned water. This last was a most important factor in preventing spoilage.

But his inclusion as a character is based, of course, on his superstition and his witching. Most of us thought very little of his nonsense, but his great peculiarity was the he really seemed to believe it himself. He was sane enough about most things and not nearly so ignorant as many of us, but about witching for things beneath the ground, he was completely bereft of his reason. He was definitely no grafter; he really believed he was rendering a service to his neighbors in helping locate a water well or in locating various minerals beneath their lands.

He was very honest and kind, would never wish harm to anyone or do an ill favor if he knew it. So, morally, he was far superior to many of his friends and neighbors. But he lived, and I am sure died, under what we always considered a great delusion. But he also lived, and undoubtedly died, without an enemy. Who of us can say as much for ourselves?

I have, also, mentioned Oliver Pennypacker. His personality was such a contradiction and his life such a waste that his memory always saddens me. He was a man of such outstanding talents, and with every opportunity to render a real service to mankind; yet he squandered those talents and withheld that service to an extent almost unbelievable, and certainly, incomprehensible.

He came to us frest out of medical school. His father was a successful business man with an interest in a cooperage factory, I think, in Ohio. He had given Oliver every opportunity and when all else failed, had financed his move to Kansas in the hope, he could start over in a new country and become a man. I am sure he hoped and expected that Oliver would settle down to a practice of medicine and leave his wastrel life behind him.

But such was not for Oliver. He never practiced medicine seriously, though I think he did have a license and would sometimes help out his friends and neighbors. One time I developed a terrific carbuncle on the back of my neck that was dealing me plenty of misery. I went to him to ask what should be done. He said it should be lanced and drained, but he had no instruments with which to do it. However, he got out his pocket-knife, whetted it up good, and gave me the works. It was just as good a job as though he had been prepared.

He was a dentist as well as an M. D., and even kept a set of dental instruments on hand. He made no pretense of

working at that trade either. But, more in sport than anything else, he would yank out a tooth occasionally. He took out one for Hank and then one day, he came over to our porch and took out my mother's, all she had left. All such activity was in the nature of being neighborly; never done as a professional practitioner.

One summer a cousin of his, Alvin Sims, conceived the idea of doing dental work on a house to house basis through the countryside, much in the manner of a patent medicine drummer. Alvin was not a dentist at all, but he had watched Oliver work and he figured with a little coaching and Oliver's tools, he could pick up a living of sorts as a traveling tooth extractor. So Oliver gave him the coaching and loaned him the tools and Alvin spent several months pulling teeth. The scheme was successful and no one reported them for malpractice, but I suspect Alvin found the financial remuneration hardly worth the effort.

By this time, Oliver's whole family had come out to our country. His father was rather old and retired from his business to come out and make further efforts to rescue Oliver from his debauchery. They bought John Walcher's place, which was next to ours on the west, and John moved into Wellington. Mr. Pennypacker brought with him his wife, his son, Emer, and his wife, who operated the farm, and Emar's children, Anna and Riley. There was a married daughter who moved out to Wellington. Anna was the age of my sister, Belle, and they became life long friends. Oliver came then to live with them on the farm. All the family were fine people and much distressed by Oliver's wildness and lack of responsibility.

Oliver could put on a great show as a musician and comedian. He liked that sort of thing, in a happy-go-lucky sort of way, and took an active part in our literary societies. Often he might make two or three appearances in a single show, as violinist, pianist or comedian. He could pick a violin like a guitar, and made musid to roll the audience in the aisles or pluck it's heartstrings. On such occasions, he was the life of the party while being the soul of gentility, a keen intellectual who could meet the simplest farmer on a common ground of mutual understanding and respect. Yet, he was never quite sober and everyone knew him to be without principle, ambition or responsibility.

He continued to drink, and it was a matter of common knowledge, at least among us boys, that he felt called upon periodically, to visit Hunnewell in search of feminine companionship of a lower moral strata than our country lasses could provide. Yet he seemed never to step over the line which would have set him apart from the community. He married into one of the best families, and while they lived over near Rome, the Perrins could not have failed to be familiar with his reputation.

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He was living at the time, with his folks next door to us and brought his bride there for a year or two. She had a miscarriage while there and almost died. My mother helped take care of her. She would come home boiling mad, and in conversation not intended for my ear, make it plain that she was sure Oliver had brought about the trouble himself, out of his desire to avoid family responsibilities.

He seemed always to be drinking and yet never to be quite drunk. About the nearest to that state I ever knew him to be, was when my brother, John, had typhoid fever. The doctor thought he should have brandy. Kansas being a dry state, it wasn't everyone who knew wher to get it. Oliver and little Ed Walcher, a worthy companion in such activity, were sent to Wellington to find some. They got back late at night with a bottle of peach brandy and duly delivered it to John's bedside. But they had acquired a little extra for themselves and spent the rest of the night consuming it.

Next morning Oliver evidently felt it would take one more good shot to hold that down. He came over bright and early, ostensibly to inquire after John's health. The bottle was on the table beside the bed when he came in. With scarcely a word to John or to any of us, he walked to the bottle, picked it up and downed a couple of stiff jolts. Then without a word of explanation or apology, he sat it down and left the house.

Oliver, like I. L. Burdick, was a great spinner of yarns concerning himself and his exploits, but, unlike him, had the faculty for making them believable. Perhaps that was partially because he was too clever to tell tales we could check on.

One such tale, as Oliver told it, was a classic, It seems that during his college days in the east, a debate arose among a group of students as to the importance of appearance in the preparation and serving of food. One side to which Oliver adhered, offered to prove the importance of the connection between sight and appetite by actually serving a meal to the other side. It was to be good food, absolutely sanitary and universally liked. And they were betting that it would not be eaten .

Brown crockery night vessels were much in vogue at the time, individual size, decorated with flowers and painted ornament, and complete with lid. A number of these were purc hased ndw from the store, thoroughly washed and sterilized. They were then half filled with sweet cider, and doughnuts, chopped into two or three sections, dropped in to bloat about. One vessel was placed in front of each doubter, he was supplied with a spoon and invited to pitch in.

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Most were prone to take it in stride and smile at the appearance of the vessels in which their food was being

served. But upon removal of the lids and inspection of the contents, it was a different story. A few hardy souls there were who ventured to sample a few bites but most were not equal to it. A good many stomachs were overturned and great was the upheaval therefrom.

This was Oliver Pennypacker, genius and polished gentleman, debauch and wastrel, good fellow and friend, moral degenerate and intellectual loafer, a man not content merely to bury the talents intrusted to him but one who felt he must hurl them far out into a desert of iniquity.

Chapter XV

The Blackwelders.

This lost of irregular, and I do not mean that word as derogatory in any sense, people would not be at all complete without the Blackwelders. They were among the first settlers and the best known families in the community. There were five in the family and four of them at least were odd, each in his own right.

Mattie was a young woman, I guess the oldest child. She probably could have been a fairly normal girl under different environment, but in this family, she had had no chance for education or development as an individual and seemed very backward. She finally did marry, though her choice of a husband was questionable, and lived the normal life of a farmer's wife, harder perhaps than many because she had a less than average husband from the standpoint of morals, temperance and industry.

The Blackwelders' peculiarities began with the old man. Elias Blackwelder had been a millwright back in Illinois, a trade which he developed to an amazing art. They came from the same section of Montgomery County we did and in some remote way were related to my family, though I never tried hard to trace and keep the connection in mind. I did not remember any of them from that time, but I had heard tales all my life of his feats with the cross-cut saw, axe, adze amd chisel.

Elias had no education, could hardly read and could just barely scribble his name. He did learn to read a little at the time his younger boy, Billie, was in school. He took great pride in studying the first and second readers which Billie brought home from school, and would tell his neighbors at great length of the childish stories he found there. But his mechanical education was something else. He not only had received excellent training but he had a natural aptitude possessed by few people in any line.

Back in Illinois, barns and many houses were framed of hewn timbers; sills, corner posts, plates and rafters, all hewn, morticed and tenoned, and held together with wooden pins. It was said that Elias customarily framed such buildings by himself, hewing out all members, doing sll the chisel work, and having everything ready to go up before anyone else came on the job. Then the neighborhood would hold a house-raising or barn-raising as the case might be, all the men coming in and throwing up the frame in a few hours. Everything fit together and dropped into place just as Elias had planned it.

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operation of a rather simple farm tool he had made. I still think it was an unusual job, though my youthful mind may have been unduly excited by it at the time. Breaking up of the clods in the newly turned sod was quite a problen to the settlers. Dragging a log over the fields was about the only means available, but that did a poor job because a log tended to slide rather than roll and could never be made to roll in a turn since one end had farther to travel than the other. Elias solved the problem.

He obtained a log about twenty-four inches in diameter and ten to twelve feet long. With cross-cut saw he cut it into sections about fourteen inches long, drilled holes through their centers and threaded them on a continuous steel shaft. These segments were not separated to any extent; to me they seemed always to ride almost against each other. Yet they had been cut with such accuracy and the holes bored so perfectly perpendicular to the faces, that they never bound in the cracks and the series of discs rolled independently across a field at whatever speed might be required.

To the uninitiated, or to a modern engineer, accustomed to precision tools and methods of manufacture, this may seem a simple thing. I assure you it was not. There was no one else in the community who would have dared try such a thing. He had retired to the farm and had no ambitions or desires in the field of mechanics. All he did was characterized by this aptitude for accuracy. In those days, a farmer's greatest pride was in the straightness of his crop rows and in this, Elias was in a class by himself. His fields looked as if they had been laid out with a transit and sowed to a stretched wire. And he saw to it that his children were well grounded in the matter of doing things right.

Mechanical genius was not his only outstanding quality. For one thing, he could curse with the best of them. He was not the abusive, blasphemous type that Crocket Barringer was. He was just one of those men to whom swearing comes as natural as breathing. He could scarcely say three words without swearihg, and he was a great talker. In such persons, swearing becomes so thoroughly associated with their personalities that it is little noticed and seldom resented.

He was also a natural comedian and a fine story teller. Artistic expression of the frontier was principally by means of prose rather than poetry or balladry. In such expressions Elias was a master. He would settle down on the shady side of a barn or on the porch of anyone's farm house and tell stories by the hour. When he started to talk, everyone started to laugh and they kept it up until he stopped. And a crowd always gathered because, when Elias was sitting, he was putting on a show. He had the type of mind which retained all the funny stories he ever heard, and the kind of imagination to improve upon them in the re-telling. Though he was course and profane, the way he put things together, always provoked a laugh, whether his audience be of saints or of sinners.

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His stories could not be repeated even if I could remember them verbatum. But a verbatum transcription would still not reflect Elias Blackwelder. He put himself into his talk in a manner no one could ever reproduce and almost anything became funny with his telling.

I remember once we were threshing and Elias was bossigg the crew pitching bundles into the thresher. Suddenly he stopped the work and loudly announced that he wanted another crew. This was a startling development and when asked what the matter was, he said, "These fellows are trying to pitch the bundle they are standing on, and are not getting any place." He had his own simple philosophy and often dropped cryptic remarks more filled with thought than one would expect to hear from him. He was not particularly religious, and while not an atheist of the Barringer stripe, he found it impossible to believe in a life after this one. His clinching argument against immortality was, "Oh, hell, even God almighty can't make a two foot rule with only one end to it."

He had had his rowdy days, as evidenced by one of his favorite stories of his boyhood. It seems that someone had gotten married and the wedding supper was in progress. He and several friends of his age were not considered eligible for attendance and they were a bit put out about it. A couple hundred yards from the house and above it on a hillside was a rail fence, a fine stake and rider fence some six or seven rails high. Each outburst of merriment from the house caused a welling up of their resentment to the extent that a section of rails would be lifted up, the stakes and riders having been removed, and hurled down the hillside toward the house. The evening's total was about a quarter of a mile of fence. The details of what happened afterward are a bit hazy to me, but they never got hazy to Elias.

He preferred his story audience free hand and took little part in organized social activities such as our debating societies. He would cometimes go to them, but preferred to sit and liste. Once, however, he was persuaded to speak. Soneone on the progran had failed to show up and Elias was asked to fill in. He had no prior knowledge of the subject, and I doubt that anyone thought he presented a highly erudite argument. But to everyone's surprise, he did get up to talk. Perhaps he was emboldened by a drink or two. He began a little slowly and awkwardly, but it took only a minute or so to get warmed to his job and to put the audience in stitches. And he kept it there without interuption, for more than twenty minutes with such a presentation of comedy and showmanship as we seldom were priviledge to witness.

Once in a while, he would drop in at a dance just to greet his friends and look on a few minutes. And occasionally, he could be prevailed upon to dance what we called a "clog." That may be a poor name for it and may mean nothing

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to most people. At any rate, it involved considerable tap dancing. And when they could talk Elias into doing it, he simply stole the show for that evening. So, all in all, the man was unique. It may be hard to arrive at his value. There is no question, however, that he held a large place in the community.

There was an older son, John, a grown young man as far back as I remember him. He, like Mattie, was decidedly backward, everyone called him just plain dumb. But that dumbness, if such it was,was coupled with a most remarkable characteristic almost akin to genius. He never went to school and no doubt, his dumbness was largely a matter of abysmal ignorance. He was the butt of everyone's jokes.

I remember once John came around to the school, I do not recall the reason for the visit. Some of the boys were having sport with him over his stupidity. One of them asked him to write his name. He reluctantly took up the pencil, stalled around a bit and finally said, "Oh, pshaw, I can't write it. You write it." The other boy took the pencil and said, "All right, what are your initials ?" John grunted a little, aquirmed, and finally said, "Now, let's see, why "J if one of 'em." His tormentor asked, "Well, is there any more?" John grunted some more and then a light dawned. He knew he had 'em this time. "Hh, yes, " he said, "let's see, three more, O. H. N." They all gave him the laugh and I guess John never did find out what his mistake had been. But John just kept going. "Oh, pshaw," he said, "I don't need no square."

John killed one of his father's fine black mares one day. It was not through viciousness and not altogether to be blamed on a fit of anger. I think he just did not know what proper punishment should be or what a horse could stand. The team balked on im when he wanted to cross a little creek. He was going home with a load of cordwood and he simply picked up a stick of it and slammed her over the head a couple of times.

But anybody could be dumb. John had something that everyone else did not have. His father's mechanical aptitude had come down in full measure to the son. John had worked with his father from early youth and had learned the use of tools in a marvelous way. The great wonder to everyone was that he could seem so stupid and still understand so much about mechanics and the work he did.

An example of his work which was widely discussed, was a skating rink building in South Haven. Roller skating had just come west and was quite a fad. Someone wanted to build a rink, and John, together with a partner, took the contract to build it. It was a large building for our new country, albiet, a not unduly complicated one.

John framed it all himself, cutting rafters, braces and so forth. But the remarkable point developed when it came time to lay the floor, the most important and particular part of a rink. Several men were at work. John told them to get their hammers and nails and that he would cut all the flooring himself. He took his saw and started to step inside. Someone said, "You are forgetting your square." But But John just kept going. "Oh, pshaw," he said, "I don't need no square."

And he didn't. He cut all the flooring with just his expert eye and skillful hand to guide the saw. It all fit and when all was finished, the levelness, smoothness and neatly fitted joints of that floor was the talk of the town.

The youngest son, Billie, seemed bright enough, but he had a marvelous ability for mis-representation of everything he talked about. He was about my age and we ran in the same gang a good deal. He was mischievous and full of pranks, but just a boylike the rest of us except for his terrific lying. He had interited his father's loquaciousness rather than his mechanical aptitude. He thought he knew everything about everything. And he had the most astonishing faculty for telling things so that we repeatedly did, we almost invariably got into trouble and found out the hard way that Bill had just been spinning a tall tale.

He would recite his tales at home or at school the same as to us boys. One day, we were still kids, Bill Link got after him for laughing in school. When pressed for the reason for his continued laughter, Billie said he just got to think of some thing that happened the evening before. He had been at a neighbor's when a hog got out and they had a hilarious time getting it back into the pen. There was a dog in the crowd and he had great sport chasing the hog; jumped right over the hog and nearly scared it to death. The whole involved tale was told very convincingly and in great detail. Billie told us boys later, that there was not a word of truth to it.

He was a pretty consistant trouble maker in school, but very slick too. Bill Link kept trying to pin something on him. I got dragged into it once when Billie had had some trouble with Bert Barringer. He was older and bigger than Bert. Bill Link called the three of us one day and I was scared to death. He tried to put me at ease by starting off with, "Now Jessie, I got you up here just as a witness. I know you didn't have anything to do with it, but I am told these boys had some trouble and I want you to tell me what happened."

Well, I was there all right, and I knew what happened. But I had no intention of being made a party to it. So I stalled and stuttered and finally told him I couldn't tell him anything about it. This was about the nearest I ever comt to telling a teacher an out and out lie.

But probably the most remarkable of all the Blackwelders was Aunt Mag., Elias's wife had died in Illinois and his sister, Margaret, and old maid considerably younger than Elias, had come out to Kansas with him to keep house and help raise his children. I would hardly consider her well qualified for the latter, as she was completely ignorant, and this being her chief characteristic of note, completely filled with ghost lore and folk lore of the clan from away back. But she was a very good, hardworking country woman of the old style.

She chewed tobacco, smoked a pipe and had the family faculty for loquaciousness. It seemed always that when she was asked a question, her mouth would be full of tobacco juice and she would have to spit before she could answer. Thus, her answer would always be in three parts; a grunt in the affirmative or negative, the sound of expectoration, and then a distinct yes or no. This sequence became a byword with us boys. When answering each other, we would grunt, "Umhuh, pfit, yes, " or "humpuh, pfit, no."

I am sure she really believed in ghosts. She seemed to have been acquainted with some since childhood, had seen many and heard a great many more. Though she had never been married, she seemed to like children, and would talk to them by the hour, mostly telling them what ghosts were, why they were, and what they did. To her, ghosts were mostly people who had lived and died, but now were back for a little while to bring some special message or perform some special deed or mission. Sometimes it was only to scare a negro out of a chicken house, sometimes to report to some woman the improper conduct of her husband, or to a husband about his wife. More often, the latter, ad this was her womanly way of gossiping about other women. Often ghosts came just to warn someone of impending trouble. The main point was, that they did come, and "You had better listen to 'em and mind what they tell you."

There was just one sure thing about Aunt Mag's ghosts; when children had listened to her stories for an hour or two, they were pretty sure to miss a couple night's sleep. My mother, and the other women too, used to become awfully provoked with her about her stories. But she did not seem to care. She seemed to think that she had a mission to perform; to bring the truth to as many of the young folks as possible. She intended to do her best.

Quite unexpectedly, the Blackwelders broke up and the older folks left our community. To the great surprise of everyone, Aunt Mag got married to a cattle man in caldwell by the name of Couzine. Only a short time before, Mattie had eloped with Deb Whitten. Deb was a worthless sort, the black sheep of a good family. Elias would not permit him to call on Mattie. He tried to borrow Pa's gun once, said there had been a coyote hanging around his place. Pa wouldn't let him have the gun; we found out later, the coyote was Deb.

These developments left the old man at loose ends, so

he decided to rent his farm and go into the cattle business over at caldwell with his new brother-in-law. A year or so later, he was back for a visit. Someone asked how he was making out. His answer was characteristic. "Oh, God, I hardly know. They told me when I w ent over there that the way to succeed in the cattle business was to learn to be a good rustler. I thought they meant a fellow had to work hard. But, my God. I've learned that s "good Rustler" is just a G.-D.* sly cattle thief."

Chapter XVI

Another Kind of character

I am afraid my list of striking individuals of my boyhood acquaintance had become too predominately made up of unsavory, or at least, not wholly admirable personalities. Perhaps this is partially due to my memories having fallen vidtim to the very prevalent human failing of retaining people's faults in excess of their virtues. This characteristic was admirably set out by Shakespeare when he reported Mark Anthony's statement in his funeral oration to Caesar, "The evil men do lives after them; the good is oft interred with their bones."

But it is a fact that evil is often more spectacular than good, at least, in it's surface manifestations. I, being as human as most people, have, perhaps, been guilty of superficial analysis of my associates' actions and motiv es.

We did have our good people, of course. And actually, most of our worst ones were not really very bad. The frontier was big, and it was free and most of it's citizens came there for that bigness and freedom and for a chance to live out their lives in peaceful association with other men of good will. Exceptions to this rule did flock to the cow towns and the mining camps, and have caused other and more talented observers than I to be guilty of remembering the worst and allowing the best to pass unsung into oblivion.

I have, so far, been guilty of another grievous error in that my memories have been largely of men rather than women. Being a boy, and one with largely outdoor interests, in what was then without question a man's world, I think it only natural that this should be so. The pioneer woman's place was definitely in the home, and while they were to be found at social gatherings, too many of their men felt that even there they should be seen as little as possible and heard scarcely at all. So I am going to correct those errors for a few pages, and try to set down some adequate impressions of one pioneer who was both good and a woman, my mother.

Women had come West with their husbands in a great majority of cases, because the man, not the woman, was possessed with great amb ition for improvement, because he felt oppressed, hemmed in or frustrated in his life's work. Therefore, the problem of adjustment to the new life was much greater for the woman, and the hardships, inherent in her work much greater than in that of the man. They came to make the homes from much or little, generally the latter, raise the children, perform their menial tasks and to help their husbands in myriad ways. Life was hard, necessities scarce and luxuries almost non-existant, but the women complained of their lot no more than did the men. That they did make the necessary adjustments and endure the hardships is their eternal glory; the development of the West their monument.

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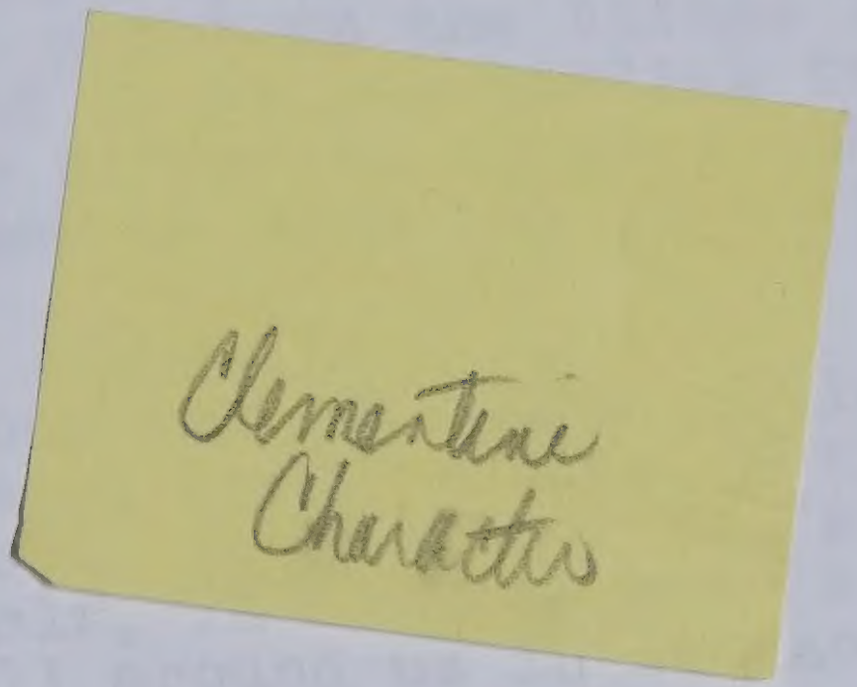
But it is a fact that evil is often more spectacular than good, at least, in it's surface manifestations. I, being as human as most people, have, perhaps, been guilty of superficial analysis of my associates' actions and motives.

We did have our good people, of course. And actually, most of our worst ones were not really very bad. The frontier was big, and it was free and most of it's citizens came there for that bigness and freedom and for a chance to live out their lives in peaceful association with other men of good will. Exceptions to this rule did flock to the cow towns and the mining camps, and have caused other and more talented observers than I to be guilty of remembering the worst and allowing the best to pass unsung into oblivion.

I have, so far, been guilty of another grievous error in that my memories have been largely of men rather than women. Being a boy, and one with largely outdoor interests, in what was then without question a man's world, I think it only natural that this should be so. The pioneer woman's place was definitely in the home, and while they were to be found at social gatherings, too many of their men felt that even there they should be seen as little as possible and heard scarcely at all. So I am going to correct those errors for a few pages, and try to set down some adequate impressions of one pioneer who was both good and a woman, my mother.

Women had come West with their husbands in a great majority of cases, because the man, not the woman, was possessed with great ambition for improvement, because he felt oppressed, hemmed in or frustrated in his life's work. Therefore, the problem of adjustment to the new life was much greater for the woman, and the hardship, inherent in her work much greater than in that of the man. They came to make the homes from much or little, generally the latter, raise the children, perform their menial tasks and to help their husbands in myriad ways. Life was hard, necessities scarce and luxuries almost non-existant, but the women complained of their lot no more than did the men. That they did make the necessary adjustments and endure the hardships is their eternal glory; the development of the West their monument.


Clementine
Charlotte

For me, there had always remained an aureole of charm about our existence, and in many respects, "existence" is the proper term in the poineer West. I ask myself why this should be, because, certainly, it was anything but an easy life. But I believe two words contain the explanation; naturalness and freedom. People came from everywhere with their own customs, their own manners of speech and dress, and with individual outlooks on life, unshackled by local tradition and inhibitions of which there were none. Thus, individual behavior was what one chose to make it so long as the peace was kept. There were scarcely any clothing fashions. Each person and family free to dress as personal taste and financial responsibility dictated. A woman might have very few dresses, but they were all in style and could be worn with perfect propriety on any occasion. And a man could be well dressed in deerskin, homespun, jeans or Prince Albert. Store clothes or hand sewn, it made no difference. So it was an easy life after all if one learned to appreciate and respond to it's better phases.

But to progress from the general to the specific, and to the heroine of this chapter, my mother. Her life and experiences should serve to point up the things I am trying to say about our frontier, and to help establish the place of women in it. She was not so different to many others who came West but I think she supplies us with the very finest example of the "Pioneer Woman."

Mother was the youngest of twelve children. If my references herein to the various members of the Walcher family leave one a bit confused, I am not at all surprised. I have had some trouble, myself, in keeping them all properly classified. We had them all around us in Illinois and they came before, with, and after us to Kansas. This is not intended to indicate that they were unwelcome friends, neighbors and relatives, only that they were numerous.

Her parents came to Illinois from North Caroline in 1845, when she was only three. This was then the fronteer, and she grew up under much the same conditions as did her own children later in Kansas. Except that her father died when she was still only a small girl, and the rest of her childhood was mostly spent in the homes of her older brothers and sisters, first one and then another, wherever her services could be best utilized. For she early learned to pay her way with household duties and child care. She helped most of them to establish homes and start their families, so she got a thorough, if not wholly scientific course in nurse's training and the care of children before she reached an age to have any of her own.

Her formal education was such as the public schools were able to give in that day. This was topped off by the experience of the war between the States which came as she reached young womanhood. So she knew only life inthe rough

from her earliest childhood. The above background information has been given just to make clear the qualifications my mother brought with her to the new frontier. It seems to me she could hardly have had a better preparation for her life's work as a pioneer mother and homemaker, and for her secondary role as nurse, mid-wife, and community health authority.

For that is what she was for so long as she lived. Not by her choice or by self-proclamation. And not as a profession, for she would never even charge a neighbor for her time as a nurse, but she was always there when needed. Doctors were scarce, some of them ill-equipped, and their services expensive, at least by the standards of the people and the times. Mother was energetic and reasonably altruistic. Instinctively, she seemed to feel that no talents should be wasted, that her's should be always available to those who might have need for them. I think, perhaps, like the good servant of the parable, she was always aware that a day of accounting would be coming. She did not expect to be found wanting.

When she came to Kansas with her husband and three small boys, she dropped into a situation wide open for the use of all the talents she possessed. Her knowledge gleaned from a large experience, her rather meager learning from the schools, folklore from a German background of growing culture, a staunch faith, even the superstitions of her simple forebears, all entered into the making of a number of talents she brought with her to this new, wild land in which she was to make a home and future for her family.

And there was no defeatism in her. Her reasourcefulness and energy seemed limitless and when one thing did not succeed, she did something else. She had always something left to try. And how well I know that many, many times through a long lifetime, she needed that reserve.

The field for the equipment for life which she brought with her to the new frontier, was without end. Always there was injury or disease somewhere and people on all sides were in need of therapeutic treatment which often they could not get. My mother was no doctor by any means, but she had been brought up to believe staunchly in proper first aid treatment, and proper preventive treatment to avoid impending trouble. Home remedies were her forte; our house always had liniments, salves, ointments, purgatives, emetics and some kind of "pain killer." She knew the virtue in many kinds of poultices and massages. As her acquaintance grew in any new community, so grew the calls for help from sick and wounded friends. And if she were able to get out of bed herself, she always responded, whether by day or night.

I ahve already admitted that some of her knowledge may have been tinged with superstition. However, she was not definitely bound to any, and she never held with what some

might call superstition unless she could see it bring results. Charms and amulets, witchcraft or incantation; these were not for her. But a home remedy that worked, she would stand by. Being without scientific knowledge of medicine, she made little effort to prove, or even understand, why something was or was not helpful. But she made a shrewd analysis of results and swore by them.

Small children often suffered, as they still do, particularly in the country, from dysentery and what we called "summer complaint." Medical services were so inadequate that such children mostly suffered with little attention/ got well if they might, died if they must. Now mother knew a treatment for such troubles which she believed to be very good. Often when a case was reported to her, she would send us boys out to run down and kill an old hen. We would eat the chicken of course, but she would take out the inner lining of the gizzard, clean it, dry it, and pulverize it. This powdered lining was then taken to the home of the sick child and given in small doses. The treatment was almost a sure cure. Nor I am not prepared to defend this method from any scientific standpoint, but I do know that sick children generally got well under her care.

There was another trouble, probably our greatest one from the standpoint of community healthe. Ill advised babies would keep right on being born where there were no hospitals, or even doctors, to receive or care for them. Or perhaps, it was the parents rather than the babies who were ill advised. Ignorant of prenatal care or the problems of mother hood, careless of the rights of children or the obligations of parents in bringing them into the world, our frontier families grew and grew. Except that too often, they did not grow. Rather the children were born to die, or were never really born at all. Or the mother herself became a sacrifice to hardship, ignorance and lack of attention.

Mother had learned a great deal about babies from her experiences in the homes of her brothers and sisters. Later, she had eight children of her own. And she had all the nerve in the world and the initiative to go ahead and do what had to be done. So, whether the doctor came or not, she could take charge of the situation and carry it through. She was competent, and perhaps, lucky. Things generally went well, and neighbors got to thinking they were just as well off with her services as with those of a doctor. She never lacked for duties of this kind, how she found time for it in addition to raising eight children of her own, I will never know.

But we were never neglected. She was an excellent cook and if there was anything at all available that human beings could eat, she seemed to know how to prepare it into a palatable, even a delicious meal. I often heard her receive the compliment that she could make a good meal out of nothing.

She was quite a seamstress also. For the first eight or ten years of her marriage, with no sewing machine at all, she made nearly all the clothing for her family, and from a most scanty supply of material. We always had something to wear, at home and to school, and enough of it to keep us warm. And shoehow she fixed us up for Sundays, for picnics fairs and parties now and then. I do not know how she did it, and we may have been a sorry looking lot by other standards than those of the frontier, but we were a happy bunch and and never ashamed to be seen anywhere or in any company.

Cleanliness, of persons and habitations, was a serious problem. Soap, generally homemade, and water were available to all, but many families, including ours, lived for years in cramped quarters completely inadequate, and thus, most discouraging to a housekeeper with pride. But many of them had little pride, having been brought up in ignorance of and indifference to cleanliness.

Not so my mother. Keeping eight children clean and providing them with a reasonably uncluttered and sanitary place in which to live, was probably a greater problem than feeding or providing clothing for them. But she did it, and would tolerate no compromises in that regard.

Body lice, greybacks to us, and bed bugs thrived on uncleanliness and were common throughout the coun try. No one wanted them, but some households were unwilling to expend the effort required to keep them out.

Once, following a visit in our house by Elias Blackwelder, it was discovered that several of us had picked up some visitors, we had not realized were calling. It did not take Ma long to get us stripped of our clothing, with baths for all and a boiling for the clothes. Then she arranged, together with several other neighbor women, to get invited over to the Blackwelders; and went over the house from cellar garret, washed all clothing, cleaned out all closets and went over mattresses. Their greybacks and bed bugs disappeared.

When we went hunting in the Territory, we sometimes camped with someone who had greybacks, or stopped in a cow camp or range cabin, and thus brought home live game as well as dead. But the live beasts were not very welcome. I remember once when Pa came in with badly infested clothing, Ma made him strip off on the back porch and leave his clothes there 'till morning. There were plenty of visitors in the clothes all right, and we found them there the next morning. But the weather had been cold that night, and they every on e were frozen dead.

Such was my mother, and such she continued to be through a long and active life, until she herself was laid low by the ravages of a malignancy at the age of seventy-eight. Living all her life on the outer fringe of civilization, raising a large family without loss, serving her neighbors

and utilizing the talents God gave her, always active socially and religiously. To me, I repeat, she was a true and noble example of what the "Pioneer Woman" should have been.

But she was not alone. In those days there were very many similar women. Devoted to their homes, their husbands and their children. Devoted to their task of making life happier and better for those they served. And they added immensely to the charm of the frontier. They stand side by side with the honorable men who helped to tame the wild, and their names on Honor's roll shine quite as brightly.

Chapter XVII

The End Of The Prairie

In this imperfect culture of the pioneer plains of Sumner County, I grew to young manhood. We had come when I was only nine. So most of my memories of childhood are associated with that country. I have carried with me for three quarters of a century, impressions from that mixed and not altogether good environment. Perhaps I have magnified the place and the time beyond it's proper place in my life and in the development of our country. But I still feel it was a great place, and a great time, and it's people were a great people. As for my place in it, I only feel that I had a glorious opportunity just to live in and be a part of it all.

To be sure, these are the impressionable years in one's life. I hope I may be forgiven the treasured spot I have reserved for them in my heart. But I am not telling my story, rather, I am trying to sketch, briefly, the frontier and the life of a family that grew up with it.

In all fairness, I must admit that all was not perfect here, and there came a time when it seemed there was nothing for us to do but to leave. Actually, we had not prospered. My father had come with a wife and five children, eight cows, two horses and a wagon, and very little else. He left with very little more; less, to be exact, in worldly goods, though the number of children had increased to eight. We had all worked hard and lived hard. But when I think back over it all, remembering the destitution, the poor luck, the poor crops and the tremendous needs of that time, I am lead irrevokably to the conclusion, that my father and mother had to be magicians endowed with the power to create substance where no substance existed.

For, though father left a poor man, with nothing much but a large family to show for years of struggle, he left with a clear conscience, without weeping or running, without debt and with no bad record behind him or any member of his family. His children had never been without food or clothes , he had never asked the county or his friends for help, nor had he, as so many pioneers found necessary, sent back to the folks at home for assistance. We had always attended school when one was available to attend, and had grown up normal, happy people. I might be subject ot question, after all, that he left a poor man.

The years from 1870 to 1890 all along the frontier in Kansas were lean years for a great many families like ours. The country was new and had to be conquered, it's climate and it's soil had to be learned. Seasons were irregular and moisture undependable. Markets were uncertain and far away,

These troubles reached a climax in the years 1885, 1886 and 1887. All were poor crops and it seemed that each

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became progressively worse. All crops were near failure in 1887. We had decided wheat was no good and that year had gone principally to corn. It was almost a complete failure. A bad drouth was in progress when the corn came into tassle. The hot winds came and the tassles burned off before they could develop and polination take place. There was for all practical purposes, no corn at all though the plants had grown fairly well and did make fodder for the stock.

On that same land, in better years, we had harvested fifty bushels to the acre. It was wonderful corn land but my father had been lulled by the good years into a false sense of security so far as climate was concerned. The dry times came and he, like many another pioneer, discovered it just was not corn country.

It had been largely planted to wheat in the beginning, and subsequent events proved the wisdom of this course. But there had been a major drift away due to poor harvesting facilities, poor transportation, a few bad years for production, and miserable prices. Corn gave promise of being the answer until the drouth years burst that bubble too.

However, prices for this crop, also, were far from satisfactory. One year we were able to sell a large part of our crop for fifty cents a bushel, the absolute top. In general, we supplied it to stock feeders around Wellington for about thirty-five cents. One year we sold a hundred bushels to a neighbor for the grand sum of twenty dollars and sometimes we burned it for fuel late in the winter when coal was high or hard to get.

One year we tried castor beans. Someone sold us on the idea that it was a coming thing and would solve our troubles. The crop did bring a good price, about a dollar a bushel, but we found it an expensive crop to grow and harvest and felt that we really made very little out of it.

We realized too late that it had been a mistake to give up on wheat. Those who were able to hang on, gradually pulled out of the lean years. Better varieties, better seasons and gradually improving prices, finally made of this country one of the finest farming sections in our nation.

Of course, in hindsight, I can see other mistakes my father made. I did not know then that they were mistakes. I think he often did know, or strongly suspect, that some of his experiments were mistakes, but I know that many times he felt forced into things which were unwise because he could see no other way. Having come west absolutely without resources, and with no one to whom to turn for help, with the demands made upon him by a large family, and with possibilities for income so limited, it is small wonder that he found himself in a constant scramble to keep a roof over our heads. The culmination of all this was his major and all inclusive,

but unavoidable mistake of debt. At this time, we were deeply in debt. The farm had always been mortgaged, first for it's purchase from the government, small as was the dollar and a quarter an acre preemption fee, and then for the building of the house. Each year's income seemed enough to feed the family and pay the interest, but never quite enough to make a serious dent in the overall indebtedness. And as crop years progressively became poorer, the debts became progressively harder to carry.

Then there was the matter of the threshing machine. While producing less and less wheat himself, Pa had become involved with several others in a scheme for harvesting it for his neighbors. This required the purchase of a steam threshing machine and other equipment, and joint responsibility for another huge debt. John A. Walcher, our kinsman and long time neighbor, had sold out to Pennypackers and gone to Wellington. Being with funds and without work, he had been instrumental in promoting this new interprise. It should have made money, but somehow the proceeds never seemed to amount to much. It meant a big investment in equipment which could be used only a few weeks of the year, and it seemed that at the end of each threshing season, there was little profit left after the help and the interest on the mortgage had been paid.

We were not alone in our problems. Bad times were winning the battle all around us and many another family was pulling up stakes.

The first opening of the Oklahoma country in the fall 1889 drew many of them, and the Dherokee Strip Opening, four and a half years later, Apr. 16, 1893, took a great many more.

By cutting all our corn for fodder, we were able to winter our horses and cows fairly well. But, since there was no grain for feed, the hogs had to go. We disposed of them any way we could, but since the troubles were general and not ours alone, there was no market for them, and we had no crops to sell, therefore, no cash income.

My father was quite at a loss to know what to do. But the problem finally seemed to settle itself in that fall of '87. There just was nothing left to do but to sell out and give up the farm. What next, he knew not, that decision would have to come later.

John A. Walcher took over the farm and the mortgage. There was little money changed hands, certainly none passed in our direction. But Pa got rid of the burden, also, the threshing machine. There was much involved bookkeeping, I could make no pretense of tracing all ramifications. John did not want the farm and resold it to Charlie Walcher. After two or three years, Charlie gave up and let the place go to his brother Al.

Big Al Walcher was one of the few who never let the country lick him. The eldest of a family of five orphan boys, he had worked hard from early boyhood to support himself and his brothers. He gave up most of the pleasures we others enjoyed in our youth, but his little place on the knoll across the creek, prospered. While still a very young man, he began to acquire these additional properties from families which had to bive up. He took over the Barringer place across the road from us, a school section and several other farms in the community. He had little more cash than the rest of us, but could get most of the property by merely assuming a debt. Somehow he managed to make the payments and eventually came out on top.

We held a public auction and disposed of most of our household equipment and livestock for the pittance such things would bring at the end of a very poor year. Everything went at a sacrifice, but there seemed no other way. By these methods, we were enabled to take care of about all of the debts, though some of the sales were on credit with final settlement long deferred. We had to take notes from many of our friends and neighbors and, in order to settle our affairs in any fashion, had to sell some of them at the bank at a discount of fifteen or twenty percent. Then, with the help and well wishes of our good neighbors, the family, with the personal belongings it had managed to salvage, was all loaded into a couple of wagons and started off. The exodus was at hand.

Even the transportation was no longer ours. The wagons had been sold and the two teams taken over by the bank which held a mortgage. All was loaned for the trip and had to be immediately returned.

We drove slowly away from our dream on the Kansas Prairie. Our eyes and our hearts turned Westward but the wheels of the wagons rolled disconsolately, and irrevokably, toward the East.

Having lost out on the farm, there seemed no place to go for the present but to town. The decision to go to Arkansas City seems to have been arrived at without reason or logic. Probably we thought Wellington and the other small towns would have little to offer in the way of work for us. Wichita would seem to have been the logical place, but we chose Arkansas City, about thirty-five miles east, in Cowley County. We had no interests, friends or connections in either place, and no known prospects, whatever, for a means to feed ten hungry mouths. But in Ark. City we landed. We rented a small house, unloaded the wagons and called it home.

We were essentially flat financially. From the sale, there would be small amounts coming in from time to time but not in important quantities. And for the present, we

had no work and nothing to eat. That first week, Pa had to take his shotgun to a grocery store and pawn it for enough necessities to keep us going. But we never seemed to be excited or overly worried about the situation. And we did not hunt up the city officials or some charitable society to ask for relief. Nor did we beg on the streets nor allow the belongings of others to stick to our fingers. But we did go to church the first Sunday in town, and every other Sunday for that matter, and some of us were out looking for work from the day we arrived.

In the course of a couple or three days, I landed a job shoveling gravel from a pit there along the river. It paid a dollar ten a day, ten hoursm six days a week. In a few days, Hank and Pa both got on the same crew. This meant big money and we could keep on eating. Not that we were entirely happy with the work or this kind of living, but we were not terribly sad about it either. W e knew a change of some kind would develop before long, and since things could not be much worse, we had reason to feel that they would likely get better.

Things rocked along this way for a few weeks, the three of us continuing to work. Then I got a little better job, as a laborer on a new depot building that was under construction. I got a dollar and quarter now; besides, I was learning something. I learned to carry brick in a hod on that job.

Then one day the change came. Arkansas City was the terminus of a division of the Santa Fe Railroad which extended south across the Indian Territory to Gainesville, Texas. The produce of the travel pit we had been working was used for the ballasting of this road. It was natural that we should come in contact with some of the railroad person nel and it turned out that one such person was from Sumner County and we knew his family there. His name was Rockhold and he was roadmaster for the division, that is, he was in charge of all it's maintenance.

He told Pa that there was a great need for maintenance personnal on the division across the territory. It was a new road and needed a lot of labor to keep it in shape. And since it passed for about two hundred and fifty miles through country essentially uninhabited, it was a hard proposition to keep men down there at work.

Mr. Rockhold proposed to Pa that he would ship him, together with John, Hank and me, and whatever camp outfit we wanted, down into the territory and put us to work on the rail road. We knew nothing about railroading fut figured we could learn. John was not yet fourteen, but he was a big, strong boy, nearly as large as Hank and I, and he persuaded Pa he was ready to do a man's work.

It sounded like a good thing to us, since nothing else was in the offing. Contrary to the reaction of many men, the

railroad might pick up for such an assignment, the prospect of camping in the wilderness of the Indian Territory was highly attractive to us. Pa had not moved into town because he wanted to,. and his love of the wild, the West, and the open spaces was equally strong in us boys. This was our opportunity to once more step out in front of civilization, to lead the parade into the unknown. And, who could tell, it might well be that Pa's hundred and sixty acres lay before him somewhere in that vast country to the South.

Our destination was a tiny spot in the wilderness called Norman, one hundred and thirty-nine miles, as the railroad ran, south of Arkansas City.

This move into the Indian Territory was sort of epochal in the Hefley family. The country was not opened to settlement at all and we were far beyond the frontier. And we only vaguely realized, at the time, the momentous events which were shaping up. We had come with almost nothing, far away from friends and former associates. We were starting life over again. As for us boys, we felt it was actually the beginning of our adult lives. We were thrilled with the prospects of adventure and looked forward to new and unknown experiences But for our father, it was really a new beginning. He too, was thrilled with the new experience, but his enthusiasm undoubtedly was tinged with sadness over the breaking up of his plans and the failure of all his hard work in Kansas.

We were not disappointed in the country. It was not the vast tableland we had come to love so well, but it was unspoiled, wild and beautiful; open country in every direction. Open prairie to the north, jack oak country a few miles east, full of deer, turkey and other game. South and West lay the South Canadian, broken country of sand hills, thickets, and wide, flat river; also, full of wild game. Altogether another pioneer's paradise.

So here begins a new story. Here with all the charm of the wild about us, we were again happy. But there could be no real content, no feeling of stabilization, until the family was together again. This was the unknown factor, the big drawback to the plan from the beginning, was the unknown factor, ~~xhexbigxdrawbackxtoxthexplanxfromxthexbeginningxwasxthexunknown~~

But in this, a providence, kind or unkind as may be the point of view, helped us to find a solution. The station of Norman was the junction of two sections, as they were called, of the railroad; two section maintenance crews of about twelve men each, made their head-quarters here and worked out in both directions. These crews were housed in the only living quarters in the place, the section house. This meant they were boarded there and provided with bunks on which to throw their sleeping gear. This building was near the tracks and two or three hundred yards south of the Norman station.

The section house was supervised by a man and his wife whose business it was to supply the working men, of the crews, with bed and board at the expense of the company. At the time we arrived, the operators of the section house had not been very satisfactory to either the railroad or the workmen. The roadmaster, was of course, acquainted with the fact that my father had left a family in Arkansas City. After we had been in Norman only a few weeks, he proposed that Pa bring all the folks down and take charge of the section house.

Pa thought it was a good idea, and he jumped on the train to run up to Arkansas City to talk the proposition over. In a few days all was arran ged for the family to come down to take over in the big house. Once more the family would be together and settled for a while.

Meanwhile, the people running the boarding house had been ordered to leave. Naturally, they resented the dismissal and the already sorry service they had been dispensing, grew suddenly and drastically worse, and the growling boarders growled much louder.

Hank, John and I were living mostly in our tent and doing our own cooking. The men started appealing to us to feed them too, and in a few days, we found ourselves serving the entire crew. The boarding house was no longer a boarding house but our camp fire became the center of a tremendous activity. Of course, this situation held for only a few days. The folks arrived early in the morning. Weary from the night ride and hungry themselves, Norman looked like the world's last jumping off place. They trailed disconsolutely down the tracks to where our tent sat, mid-way between station and section house. Hank and I were getting breakfast and were too busy to go to the train to meet them, or even to give them our attention when they reached us. But we were glad to wee them and yelled out our greetings. I told them to stay out of the way until we got the men fed and then we would take care of them. They sat around on the ground, on the tracks and in the tent; and looked forlorn.

The new job meant taking care of from twenty to thirty-five men all the time for board and lodging, in addition to the ten of us. Orans and Nora, the older of my sisters, were teenagers by now and able to help. My father quit working on the railroad and devoted his time to helping mother and the girls run the establishment. We boys continued with the railroading and all in all, we were doing very well financially.

Spring and summer passed, and our lives settled into a serene and uneventful pattern. Hard work and sweat were nothing new and we enjoyed the new life. However, as autumn came, Pa and Hank and I began to get that old feeling. Hard work was all right for some people, but for those with talent like ours, hunting was the thing. We dicided to quit the railroad for the winter and devote our time to more

pleasant pursuits. But this decision was not arrived at frivolously and without purpose. For the first time, we had a really good exxcuse for wasting our time hunting. Tremendous quantities of food were consumed by our hungry goarders, and we had to get it some way. Deer and turkey were cheaper than beef, or so we figured it, and lots more fun to provide.

The experiment turned out very well. We, figuratively, wallowed in a paradise of hunting expeditions and amply supplied the huge table. Surpluses of game were shipped to markets in Kansas City and St, Louis. These markets were good and, with our railroad connections, readily accessible. This work we could really enjoy, and the profit was all we had hoped for.

I decided to give up the hunting in January for a term in school but Pa and Hank continued. Ben Walcher was with them, also. We had written him of our decision to spend the winter hunting, and Ben was never one to let even one hunting expedition get away from him. So he spent the winter with us.

But the paradise of this changing world seemed always destined for early, and oft times, violent disruption. With the passing of the hunting season, Pa and Hank went back to railroading, and there was never to be such another winter. Something else was developing of far greater importance and lasting effect upon us, the new country and the nation. That was the spring when central Oklahoma was opened for settlement; April 22, 1889. The country was changed over night, and so, also, were the Hefleys.

Chapter XVlll

The First Opening.

The story of the opening of Oklahoma's lands to settlement had been told too many times for me to go into detail here; or for me to attempt to add anything important from a historical standpoint. I shall, however, outline briefly, our part in it in order to demonstrate it's effect upon us.

Stories of the opening do not always agree and those who attempt now to ferret out what happened, often are at a loss to know what to believe. I and my family were present, had been in the country for a year and stayed on through it all. we tried to see and hear what we could. But our tiny segment of knowledge concerning these events, can constitute only a jagged, ill-defined piece in the puzzle of the over-all. Scenes and events were similar everywhere, but varied greatly in detail. Much depended on terraine, the distance from the border, the type of crowd one say, whether the scene was in town or far removed from it, near a railroad or away. Many things colored the picture.

But most people, I believe, have tried honestly to tell what they saw. So my advice to those who may feel concerned is to believe most of what you may read; it is probably true, or as nearly so as any individual is enabled to see the truth of an event of such magnitude.

Briefly, the basic facts of the first opening are these. In the central part of the Indian Territory, and this included the Norman station, lay nearly two million acres known as the "unassigned Lands." Fifty to sixty years previously, it had been vaguely designated as the propery of one or another of the Five Civilized Tribes as they were removed to the West from their native lands east of the Mississippi. But in the process of repeated shuffling of boundaries, assignmen t of additional tribes to the area, treaties, purchase, deceit, governmental chicanery, and bilking of our Indian brothers, whose governments we had promised to honor and respect as sovereign, there had been accumulated this great area belonging not to no one but the federal government. Tremendous pressure had been put on the Congress for years to open this country to white settlement, and at last in March of 1889, a bill was passed so ordering.

Since this area was completely surrounded by Indian reservations, it took no great imagination to see that, once it was settled by white men, nothing could stand before the pressure for further incroachment on the Indian lands in order to join this island of white progress with the rest of the nation. The Indian had lost his last great battle.

The law provided that any male citizen more than twenty-one years of age might take up a clain. Unmarried women were eligible, but that was of no concern to us. But a pro-

viso ahat did virally affect us, was that which required any claimant to be outside the area at noon of the day of the opening. Since my family was already resident in the area, and had permanent enployment there, it did not seem to matter to anyone whether we stayed or departed. The same applied to all the section hands. Soldiers were sent through the country to see that no one was in it and they did a very good job of routing out squatters, "sooners" as they were called, though a great many came back in under cover of darkness in the nights immediately preceeding the opening. The soldiers moved back and forth over the railroad and were in and out of Norman and the boarding house, frequently, but never was anything said about my father leaving. No one so much as hinted that he might be forfeiting his rights to take up a claim by continuing with his business.

As a matter of fact, the railroad and it's employees were being utilized in the preparations for the big event. Railroad surveyors laid out the Norman townsite, and I presume others along the road. Having been a big promoter of the settlement of the country, the company seemed to have been assigned some responsibility for carrying it out. Our section crews were asked to help in the check on the presence of unauthorized persons and materials. The night of April 21, Hank made a run by himself north to Moore on the "hurdy-gurdy", a three-wheeled hand car, to see what unauthorized activity might be in evidence along the right-of-way. He spotted the lights of a camp, but upon investigation, found it to be that of soldiers on their way to Purcell, across the Canadian in the Chickasaw Nation, where they would be on duty for the opening. On the morning of the opening, John was sent by the section foreman, to Moore to watch everything that might be unloaded from a train . Nothing and no one was supposed to come in ahead of the noon deadline.

Norman was only three or four miles from the river to the southwest, which was the boundary of the Unassigned Lands. But the Canadian had a wide and treacherous bottom with few safe trails across. The bulk of the would-be settlers came from the north where they could proceed across an imaginary line into the land of promise. Some, likewise, from east and west. But on the south, Purcell, about eighteen miles away, was the principle point of entry and trains the most important means of transportation. There was, however, a river ford southwest of Norman and a great many people came in by wagon or horse at this point.

A majority of the entrants from the south seemed to be purely land speculators. And these, of course, were the first to arrive in the Norman area. Bona-fide settlers, or would-be operators of businesses, having come to the country from the north and east, naturally entered the area from these directions. But persons already resident in the Chickasaw Nation nearby saw an apportunity to satisfy their curiosity, to find a few days excitement, and possibly to pick up a quick dollar in land a lot spedulation. So many of them

made the run without serious intent and willingly retired to their homes within a few days. But in the meantime, most claims in the area changed hands repeatedly, and the final filer with the land office may have been many times removed from the man who first sank his stake that afternoon in April.

I, of course, was of age, and I decided I wanted to make the run. But the proclamation declaring the opening came only thirty days prior thereto. It found me far removed from the scene in Ft. Scott, Kansas.

About the first of the year, I had given up the hunting expeditions in favor of school A year before when we had just broken up on the farm, it looked like school was a thing of the past for me. The family was so destitute and I was a man grown, with only a country school education,--what right or reason had I to expect further education. But the last year had seen a lot of changes. The family was on it's feet again and I had had a steady income from work and hunting for a full year. For the first time in my life, I was in the chips. My little nest egg would appear laughable in this day, but I felt then right flush, and right proud of myself.

Sometine during that year Charlie Walcher had heard of, and made arrangements to attend this school at Ft. Scott. It was a denominational school known as the Ft. Scott Normal College. Actually, it was hardly a college, and we certainly were not ready for college work. But Charlie got up there and liked what he found. He began writing to me and urging that I come. I decided to start with the January term.

I had expected to continue indefinitely, or until my money ran out. But now the lure of adventure was calling, and I felt I must answer. Fortunately, the terms were only about three months and I was able to complete my work. I got home a week or ten days ahead of the opening.

Ben Walcher had stayed on to hunt as long as the season lasted and then he, too, decided to stay for the big event. So I found him still in Norman when I got there.

Though I might have gone back to work for the railroad in order to establish my right to stay in Norman, I decided there would be no advantage in doing so. I knew the section in which I wanted a farm, the area known as the "Ten Mile Flat" lying east and north of the river and northwest of Norman. Many of the section crew, like my father, saw no necessity for going outside prior to staking claims. But I felt I could wade the river on foot and be where I wanted to go quicker than I could get there from home.

So Ben and I packed up an outfit and crossed the river to spend about a week in camp while awaiting the run. We did not want anyone to have a chance to say they had seen us around Norman ahead of time.

Pa felt he was needed at home. Knowing there would be a lot of hungry people around on the twenty-second with no means of getting food, he ordered in a great many extra supplies, and he and mother prepared as best they could, to feed all they could when the great day arrived.

And come it did. So did the people. In a few minutes after twelve o'clock noon, throngs from the south and west began to arrive. In no time at all, the special trains were arriving from Purcell, with people jumping off all along the the way to spot and stake their claims in what looked to each to be the best area. After horsemen from the west had crossed the railroad tracks and gone on east, my father took stake in hand, walked across the tracks himself and staked the hundred and sixty acres adjoining the townsite on the south. Then he went back to help the women folks try to feed the hungry multitude. This went on all afternoon and far into the night.

Henry, next younger than I, was of age, but his physical condition was such that he could hardly occupy, and certainly, could not word a claim. However, Hank went with him and they rode out to the southeast of Norman a little way and found an unoccupied tract. They slept on it that night, but decided against filing a claim.

Ben and I broke camp that morning and prepared for the run. Ben was riding his big horse, Bill, and intended to cross below camp, but still up-stream from the ford, and ride toward Norman until he could spot a good farm. He felt he could be ahead of the crowd from the main river crossing. Apparently, he was. He reported that he saw no one at all as he rode through the bottom and out onto the prairie beyond. There he found what he wanted and put down his stake. But it was only a matter of minutes until he found his right cahllenged by another horseman who said he had ridden in from the west and had been there first.

Ben always declared that, all things considered, the man's story was impossible, that he could not have crossed ahead of him without his having seen him, and he could not have done it anyway if he had started riding at noon.

Both parties remained adamant, though not violent, and both refused to give up the claim in search of another. Both were without witnesses, so that neither could prove anything. Ultimately, they both realized they could gain nothing by holding out, and after some days of haggling, both sold their rights, if any, to a third party.

We all learned to our sorrow, during this event, that staking a claim without witnesses was most foolish and entirely a waste of time. The woods were full of smart operators just looking for such simple folk and they invariably took away their clains. Even legitimate witnesses were sometimes not enough because illegitimate ones were easily obtainable

by those unscrupulous enough to desire their services.

As for me, my land tenure was even more brief and profitless than any of the others. I went north from camp and crossed at the lower end of the Ten Mile Flat at the mouth of Boggy Creek. I found my clain right there in the river bottom with it's outer edge reaching up over the bluff to the east. I sank my stake and was beginning an exploration of my property, when a man approached me, also, on foot from the east. He advised me I was on his claim and pointed out to me the evidences thereof. There soon appeared to be no doubt that he actually had been there first. He told me he had ridden in from a little farther up the river.

So I swallowed my disappointment and left him in possession. I could hardly believe he could have beaten me though I was convinced that he had. Then I found out how. As I walked away to the south, and east, I found the camp, nestled and well hidden in a thicket at the base of the bluff. It had no occupants at the moment, but the horses and wagon, the camp gear strewn all about, were irrefutable evidence that several persons had been here since at least the day before. Now I was angry as well as disappointed, but short of going back and shooting the guy, I could see no way to put him off. There was that little matter of witnesses that made him the better man and left me just a frustrated farm boy.

Years later, I realized my loss was not really so great. Old Man River ultimately became the winning claimant. Much of the fine bottom I visualized as a future crop haven, was subject to overflow and now lies within the broad bed of the river, blow sand or quicksand in season, dotted with dunes, scraggly willows and johnson grass. This old grey head would have been greyer sooner had I been obliged to sit idly by while this happened to my land.

It is easy for me to see now how foolish we all were in those days. While we were all after land, we never seemed to know just why and we seemed unable to recognize the potential in most that presented itself. Only Pa knew why. He wanted land b ecause he was of the soil and knew he would always be of the soil. But we boys had other ideas or were too unsettled in our minds about our futures to care much whether we had land. But Pa was as guilty as the rest of us in not recognizing the value of property for property's sake. He visualized property only as a home and a means of livelihood. He could only settle for what he considered the best. With these self-imposed restrictions, the taking of claims became a rather involved affair and the result was, we repeatedly passed up opportunities for real gain.

As matters turned out, I could have easily, and properly, filed on Henry's claim or have helped him to maintain his right to it. Why I did not, I'll never understand, but at the time, it just did not seem to be worth the dollar and a quarter per acre filing fee. Or Pa's could have been pro-

tected if filed in my name since I had been the only member of the family to leave the area ahead of the opening. In the latter case, however, he went ahead and filed with no thought that his rights were not valid. This was strictly a question of ignorance on our parts, not indifference.

I never quite understood most of the legal aspects of this matter of taking claims. To this day, I have remained convinced that most of what went on was not legal at all. At best, the entire system was ill-advised, unstudied, and grossly unfair. But eventually, someone's claims, in regard to each piece of property, were held to be valid and everyone came out at the top or bottom as fate decreed, of the maze of dispute, misrepresentation, falsehood, and trickery.

Town property was all handled by a town company, a sort of officially recognized promotional organization, and any settler could take up lots irrespective of his status as regards a farm claim. Pa was able to acquire some in the heart of downtown Norman on what was to become the bank corner, potentially, quite valuable. And by some sort of trading, he got an interest in a couple more adjoining the two originally claimed.

After my failure to find what I wanted in a farm, I drifted on into town and staked lots myself, two or three blocks east. Neither of us had any idea of improving them, and we had not the foresight to realize their valus. I sold my rights for fifty dollars to the section foreman, without ever filing. It became apparent, within a few days, that contests were going to be filed against property taken up by railroad employees and Pa did not feel a fight over the lots was justified. So he too let them go without filing. I think he got about a hundred and fifty dollars. A section hand by the name of Munn had taken the Claim just west of the townsite, but he became frightened and disgusted at the contest talk and sold his rights for two hundred dollars.

Ben Walcher, also, came on into town and found a pair of lots he could claim. He kept his for a while, more about that later.

In the meantime, affairs at the section house were humming. The folks undertook to feed every one who came along, and they came in almost a constant stream, those first days and nights. Extra supplies were readily available, a telegram to Arkansas City or Purcell brought them in on the next train. Our efforts had the blessing of the railroad, and it's co-operation was a big help to us and to the hungry hordes.

Meals were served family style, and we got fifty cents a meal for a day or two, later dropping back to the universal standard of twenty-five cents. we did not consider the raised price a gouge since providing the required quantities of food

put a great atrin on our resources and physical stringth. It was certainly not the intent to extort an unwarranted price, but we did manage to make a good deal of money, for us, while the rush was on, in exchange for an awfully lot of work.

Our supplies had not been adequate after all, that first day. Meals were stopped in the late afternoon, because there was nothing left of which to make them. Then hit and miss lunches of whatever could be scrapped up, were served at prices from a nickle up. but after a while even the scraps ran out and everything had to shut down until a train got in with more food that night.

Meat was cooked in an iron wash boiler in the back yard. Bread was an item which we could not get shipped to us, and for which there was a great demand. Neither the facilities, nor the time, were available for baking it. So Ma resorted exclusively to the making of biscuits to supply the bread for a few days. They made mountains of them, their manufacture and baking being almost a continuous process. Belle, who was only ten, stood on a stool and cut them out for hours on end, until she cried with fatigue and could scareely keep from going to sleep over her dough. After supplying our own table all the surplus, we could turn out, were baked and sold at twenty-five cents the half dozen.

Contrary to the picture of violence, argument and ill-will that has been painted by many, the opening in Norman was the height of peace and good humor. All was bustle and disorder, to be sure. No one knew what was going on and most did not even know why they were there. But it was all good, clean fun and nearly everyone enjoyed the situation. The atmosphere was more that of a picnic or county fair than the frim business of competing for homes would seem to warrant. There were, of course, unfair, even ruthless, advantages taken in the staking of claims, but everyone seemed to take their problems as a matter of course, and they came into town to relax, swap stories and find out what other people were doing, but not to make trouble for each other.

It is said, there were fifty thousand people lining the boundaries of the Unassigned Lands that bright, spring morning in April. A good many thousands of them were in and around Norman that evening. Probably only five hundred were there to stay. A great many departed that night, for Okla. City which seemed to hold a greater attraction than the other towns, for Purcell from whence they came, or to their homes in the Chickasaw Nation. Most of those who stayed, had not come for farms. Many recognized the opportunity for business and services which would rapidly develop and were there to furnish them..

Norman was no longer a dot in the wilderness of Indian Territory. Norman and Oklahoma were already going establishmenta of civilized commerce and industry.

Chapter XlX

Norman

Oklahoma was very different from any other newly settled section. It had little resemblance to the frontiers any of us had known in Illinois and Kansas. It can hardly be said that it was a frontier at all. In contrast with the typical gradual development of isolated farm communities hampered by the lack of transportation, markets, and service establishments, here was a vast country settled overnight, with a food railroad traversing it's heart, and towns full of people eager to transact business of any nature.

The people as a whole, were not frontier people either. Actually, we felt out of place almost at once. The settlers came for the most part, from fully settled and well developed rural sections of other states or from towns and cities already quite modernized. They came from every state in the union, industrial people, business people, professional people as well as farmers. They were of all backgrounds and nationalities. While we had known individuals of various extractions, our settlement in Kan sas had been largely German and Northern. Those who were something else when they came, were rapidly assimilated.

But here all was different. Every man was an entity unto himself and owed no allegiance to local custom or precedent,of which there was none. So each brought his own confusing manners and customs and rather amusing colloquial speech. We found here, and for the first time in our young lives, great numbers of our erstwhile enemies of the Confederacy. While a young gentleman of the South could, with all propriety "carry" his lady friend to church on Sunday night, the attempt of such a thing, would have proved most embarrassing to one of us Northern plainsmen.

The whole mass of people was a distinct conglomerate and it took some time and effort for this mass to congeal. These things did present a handicap, but often there was much fun in the learning of each other's customs. Through some perverted process born of ignorance, and perhaps jealousy, there exists, in some quarters, even today the opimion that Oklahomans are a sort of race apart, half savage, half backwoods, largely, uncultured and of low standard intellectually. It is true that some of the worst from other states joined us here, but it is equally true that some of the best did likewise. The actual, irrefutable truth is that we are the most cosmopolitan of all the world's peoples.

As for the Hefley's, there was something left for us in the nature of pioneering after all. We had to find another way of making a living from the start. Pa felt he could not do justice to the work for the railroad while developing his new farm, so he asked to be relieved at once. I went back to work temporarily on the section. We boys fell back on

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this work for several years, between school terms, or at odd times when we had nothing better to do. But, for the most part, we did not lack for work.

My father wanted to start making improvements on his newly staked claim as soon as possible. The talk of contests was in the air and he felt that his right to hold the land would be improved in ratio to the improvements he could place upon it. He knew sooner or later, someone would contest since he had openly remained in Norman prior to the dead line. But he was absolutely firm in the belief that he had done no wrong.

The contest came in a matter of only a few days. A man by the name of Miller from Purcell filed a challenge. Pa was sure a true statment of the situation would show him to be in the right, and he was willing to stand or fall with the facts. He went to the other party and, together, they made a deposition, signed it before a notary and turned it over to the land office for a decision from the land court. That decision was a long time in coming.

The improvements were begun right away. The farm joined the townsite on the south. The northwest corner came up to the railroad right-of-way, and was just across the section line from the townsite, and only a couple of blocks from the railway station. Pa decided to build a house there as near the station as he could, but instead of just a house in which to live, it was to be, also, a hotel. Not a very imposing hotel to be sure, but a place where a good many transient people might find accommodations in an otherwise rough and ill-equipped town.

Now this was largely a pioneering adventure for all of uf. The folks knew nothing about running a hotel. Possibly, Pa remembered those years so long ago at Belmont when his post office took in boarders. And the past year with the railroad had taught us something about feeding people in a plain folks sort of way. So the hotel sounded like a good proposition.

But that project would take time. Meanwhile, we had to have a place to live, and if possible, a place to carry on a business. For with the opening, we had immediately acquired a rather steady list of boarders in addition to our old responsibility, the section crews. It was hoped this business might be retained both as a matter of income and to prevent someone else from stepping in to captialize on our pioneering effort.

Ben Walcher still had his lots, well enough located for this business but not in great demand for permanent business construction. So Ben and Pa made a deal. Ben went to Purcell for a load of lumber, and they threw up a plank shack large enough for cooking and eating. In the rear they

stretched tenting and made room for a number of people, in addition to the family, to sleep. Thus, for the summer, at least, they soon had the facilities to be in business again. Crude as it all was, it was the best the town afforded and there were customers aplenty.

At the same time Pa was getting the hotel under way, a lumber yard was soon established, locally, wo that materials were more readily available. It was just a big, square two-story house, as many sleeping rooms crammed into it as possible, no toilets, no baths, no plumbing of any kind, because there were, of cours, no utilities available. But it was as good as most people in the country would expect to find, And the food was considerably better than that. So it did a good business and produced a consistent income.

We got it finished and into operation in three or four months. Furnishing it was a major problem but Pa did not let that worry him. New furniture was out of the question. But there was soon a good deal of second hand furniture availab le from settlers who got homesick and pulled out. Then there was one rival establishment got started that summer in a tent, but it did not last long, and Pa bought up some of it's equipment. He manged to throw together a bed and wash stand for each room, and a cheap chair or two.

We were all working together to improve the farm and in a couple of years had accomplished a great deal. We fenced and quarter-fenced it, broke out quite a lot of it and got it in shape for growing crops. Put out several acres in grape and berry vines and fruit trees. And then we found a third source of work and profit from our new home.

The town, as with all new towns in the West, was at first just a jumble of simple and temporary structures of lumber, hardly anything more than shacks. But as soon as things were a little settled, business began to assume a profitable routine, and people began to "get their feet on the ground" so to speak, ther developed a demand for better and more permanent construction, both for homes and business buildings. This meant masonry, and masonry meant an exploration and explitation of local sources to avoid transportation costs. A few early buildings wereof native stone but it was scarce and of poor quality in the vicinity of Norman. It was decided, however, by men who knew something of such things that there were deposits of clay and sand in the area suitable for the making of brick.

One such deposit which seemed promising, lay along a little creek which ran through the east side of Pa's farm. So pretty soon, and without quite knowing how it happened, we had developed an interest in the brick business. Here we were, quite without knowledge or skill and with little means of education. But we decided to try making brick. We had to learn and do everything from scratch. But in

spite of it all, in a few months, we had cleaned up an area, laid out the operations, installed our primitive equipment, and were ready to make and burn brick.

As a matter of fact, our brick plant was not entirely without precedent, nor was our operation of it entirely without knowledge. An old fellow who claimed some experience in the business, had brought in, or made a little equipment, and had made and burned one kiln there along the creek. For some reason his venture was not very successful and he seemed glad for us to take over the operation and he supplied any advice and help he could.

This venture, too, prospered in a modest way. We were the first local producers of consequence, actually, the only ones ever at Norman. The bricks were of fair quality, and the local demand continued heavy enough to consume all we could find time and inclination to turn out. This business lasted more than ten years, until machine methods were installed in plants within the territory and hand-made bricks could no longer compete.

With these diverse interests, there was always work and a fair return for all of us, and we were quite busy those first years in Norman. Another development which was to have a great deal of meaning for the family, was the establishment in 1892, of the State University at Norman. John and I continued an interest in education and both entered the University at it's first enrollment. Belle and Nellie, the youngest girls, entered later as they finished schools of lower classification.

With Hank largely interested in the brick business and John and I in school, it soon developed that Ben Walcher was more help for Pa on the farm than any of us. So, more or less accidentally, Ben just stayed on. It turned out that he lived with us most of the time for about four years. These were very active years for all of us.

Then came the blow. It took the Land Office in Washington about five years to reach a decision concerning such claims as the one we occupied. It finally handed down the edict that all persons, such as my father, who were in any way employed in the area opened for homesteading, and who had stayed in the ares on the day of the opening, were disqualified to take up lands therein. This was plain, applicable, and not subject to further contest. My father was out. His hundred and sixty acres had escaped him again, his destiny lay somewhere beyond.

I think Pa took that decision pretty hard, though he was one who did not talk of his troubles or bemoan his fate. He made the best of a bad situation and just charged it off to bad luck as he had had to do with so many things. Our lives had to go on, and they did.

The University had started in a native stone building on West Main Street, but ahortly it was permanently located and a new building constructed on a tract about half a mile south of the south line of the townsite. Pa found a five-acre tract about a half mile west of it which he could buy, and where there were materials for brickmaking. The Land Office ruling made it possible for a dispossessed homesteader to remove all improvements if he so desired. So the hotel was moved, without dismantling, somewhat remodeled, and the rooms, extra to family needs, prepared for the occupancy of students attending the University.

Some of the fruit trees and all of the vines were al-bearing, but we transplanted all to the new acreage. We took down and moved all the fencing, and we transferred all the equipment of the brickyard to a site on the new tract, and kept the brick production going.

We settled down as best we could for a few years. Pa and Hank kept up the brick business and, each year, rented some land in the vicinity for farming. John and I continued in school and were pretty well occupied with that for some years. The older girls got married and the younger ones grew up. They, too, before either of them finished school, departed to establish their own homes.

All this time my father was just waiting. He had gone out from Illinois in the early seventies, with his face to the west, his goal, a hundred and sixty acres somewhere which he could call his own, and where he could make a home for himself and his family. I think he felt that he had so far failed to reach that goal, that, as yet, he had been only a sojourner here and there, and that even now, he was only in camp for a while. He was not content but neither was he melancholy, he was just waiting. He must keep his face to the West, there would be other frontiers, other opportunities for the man who was sedulous, patient and ready.

Chapter XX

The Wedding.

Sooner or later to every large family such as ours ther comes a time when some of the children begin to invision the romance, the glamour, the independence, the overall importance of establishing their own homes. It was ever thus, and will ever be. The obstacles in the way of realization of those dreams in a row, new country, were considerable. But there, as in other places and other times, young love is inclined to overlook the obstacles or be possessed of an abundant faith that they can be overcome. This is as it should be, and so it was with us.

We older boys, however, seemed not be become seriously bitten by the marriage bug. I remained for the girls to begin the dispersal from the family fold in pursuit of happiness in their separate ways.

Following the opening in the Spring of '89 and the establishment of Guthrie as the territorial capitol, there was soon begun in Guthrie, a considerable program of construction of permanent buildings. A Contractor from Newton, Kansas brought a crew down from there for the construction of a bank building With him, for the purpose of accomplishing the masonry work, came two young brick and stone masons, Jack and Charlie Kahoe. Later, a new bank building was started in Norman, the first permanent building in town. It was to be of native stone, out on the job. This same contractor was awarded the work, so to Norman in the fall of that same year, Jack and Charlie came to do the masonry work.

We had moved into the hotel and the boys came to live and board with us. Jack was married and later brought his family to Norman. Not so Charlie, however, and it was not long before Orana took his eye. Or maybe he took hers. At any rate, we were not long in finding out that they meant business.

The building was finished, and Jack and Charlie went back to Newton for a time. Meanwhile work had been started on a permanent school building at the Mekusukey Indian Mission over in the Seminole Nation. This was east of the Pottawattomie Country and about fifty miles from Norman. Something developed to cause the government supervisor to dismiss the contractor. In casting about for a means of completing the work, someone called his attention to Jack as being capable of superintending it, and a deal was made which again brought Jack and Charlie to Oklahoma.

So Charlie showed up again in Norman. I suspect he had a greater interest there than in Mekusukey. They were married in May. Two of Orana's friends served as bridesmaids and best man, "stood up" with them, as we called it. No one had fancy cloghes and no one thought of having a fancy

Chapter XX

The Wedding.

Sooner or later to every large family such as ours there comes a time when some of the children begin to invision the romance, the glamour, the independence, the overall importance of establishing their own homes. It was ever thus, and will ever be. The obstacles in the way of realization of those dreams in a raw, new country, were considerable. But there, as in other places and other times, young love is inclined to overlook the obstacles or be possessed of an abundant faith that they can be overcome. This is as it should be, and so it was with us.

We older boys, however, seemed not be become seriously bitten by the marriage bug. I reserved for the girls to begin the dispersal from the family fold in pursuit of happiness in their separate ways.

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So Charlie showed up again in Norman. I suspect he had a greater interest there than in Mckinney. They were married in May. Two of Grace's friends served as bridesmaids and best man, "stood up" with them, as we called it. No one had fancy clothes and no one thought of having a fancy

wedding. Few, if any, in the town could have afforded such things, but we were too close to the soil, too busy with living and ekeing out a livelihood in a new land to care.

The family was all at home, and we all went together dowm to Reverend Avery's house. He was pastor of the Southern Methodist Church. They had a little frame church building, and we attended there more or less regularly, it being the nearest to our preferred denomination. But the wedding was at the parsonage rather than in the church, I do notnow recall why. They left immediately by team and wagon for their new home at Mekusukey.

Orana was barely eighteen, and I suspect not exactly prepared for what awaited her. On the other hand, she was the eldest daughter, had spent her life on the frontier, had done her share in taking care of a large family. She must have had, or developed fast, a considerable self-reliance and resiliency. I am going to try to set down her experiences as she recently recalled them to me.

"There was quite a camp of construction workers at Mekusukey, and of course, no place for anyone to live. Nor was there materials from which houses could be built, the materials for the mission building all being freighted in from Muskogee. But a number of tents had been set up with side walls some three or four feet high, made from the lumber which would ultimately go into the roof of the building. Floors were the bare soil and canvas made our roof. We had some few household goods, but a few was all we could use, a wood stove and a bed just about filled the places."

"Water had to be carried about a hundred yards from a spring down near the creek. I well remember that the cliff above the spring harbored a large colony of rattlesnakes that summer. We never went down there but what they could be seen slithering about almost over our heads. I, and I suppose the other women, was too scared to touch them, but why the men couldn't be persuaded to clean them out, I don't know. I suppose they thought it was too good a joke on us to be spoiled."

"There was a little store about three miles away where we could obtain the immediate necessities of life. Sometimes the freighters from Muskogee would bring us over something special in the way of food or clothing that could not be had at the store."

"The country was full of wild cattle, at least they looked pretty vicious to us women. I became friendly with the wife of a carpenter on the job who owned horses and we would always ride when we went to the store, or out for any reason. However, some of the women occasionally walked, until one day a couple of them were treed by the cattle. They were afraid to climb down from the tree until someone

was sent out from the camp to rescue them."

"Our horses were anything but gentle, and often we had considerable bucking and shying before we could mount and be on our way. But one morning one of them was worse than usual, so much so, that we could not even approach him to put on the saddle. It was only after a great deal of backing and filling that we discovered the cause of his excitement, a large rattlesnake peacefully taking his rest in the horse's manger."

"There was an Indian School some two or three miles away. We made friends with one of the girls teaching there and visited her often. We bought chickens and garden stuff from the Indians. This was Indian country, of course, and no white settlers at all."

"The summers passed pleasantly enough, but it was late fall before our job was finished and the cold winds and rain went through the side walls of our tent. I was awfully glad to get started home. One of the freighters agreed to take uf to Norman in his wagon and we piled our meager belongings in and set forth. But at Little River, we found our way blocked by flood waters all over the bottom. Fording was impossible and there was nothing to do but settle down to wait out the weather."

"It continued to rain to some extent, so we rigged a shelter by fastening the wagon sheet at one side of the wagon bed, pulling it over to slope down to the ground on the other. We all three slept there under the wagon for three nights."

"Once Charlie heard some disturbance among the horses at night and got up to investigate. I heard him walking around outside, but not knowing he was out, I supposed we had a visitor. Much alarmed, I turned over and shook my neighbor vigorously, and in excited whispers urged him to get up and repel the invasion. Needless to say, my embarrassment was considerable when I discovered it was not my husband sleeping beside me."

"Finally the river settled back into it's banks and the men decided we could get across, though it was still considerably swollen. Our driver rode across and back on one of the horses to explore the situation. Though the horse had to swim part of the way, the men felt we could make it. Of course, the water would come up into the wagon bed. I could visualize myself floating down that cold and angry current in a wagon bed and the prospect was too much for me. I refused to ride over. That complicated matters considerab ly, but Charlie scouted up and down the bank until he found a large log spanning the water. I finally agreed to try that. I girded up my courage, lay flat on the log and b egan inching my way out. Charlie followed close behind to catch me when I slipped, which I expected momentarily. We made it"

Chapter XXI

A New People

I have previously stated, in connection with the first opening of Oklahoma, that with the overnight settlement of the country by white people, the frontier was gone. For all practical purposes, this was true from a physical standpoint. But in a larger sense it was not true at all. The frontier as I had known it in Kansas was gone. But here there was something, I will call it a "somewhat" if I may, just as strange, just as complex, just as wild and unpredictable as any frontier anywhere could be. Perhaps the word for it was "chaos". Some where yet far away in the future would come the "cosmos".

I felt this thing, I tried to understand a little part. Perhaps with a few words here, a brief statement of conditions as they developed for the first years, I can explain a little of the character of the new land and it's people.

They came from everywhere, these people, with many differences in tastes, customs, prejudices. All these differences clashed more or less. People being what they are, there was often the necessity for duplicating and conflicting effort which compromise and the broad view could have eliminated.

Consider for example the matter of schools. Some of our new citizens had grown up with private schools, others with public schools. Some were strong for educational institutions, some equally strong for separate schools for boys girls. The territorial government established co-educational public schools as a policy and began to get them under way as rapidly as possible. But many persons, who considered themselves educators, were active from the start in getting private schools started. Some acted as individuals, some represented churches or social orders of one kind or another.

The principle faults with all this were the tendency it created to segregate the interests of a community, the duplication of work, and the lack of standardization in instruction. Real progress oftimes was retarded.

And in religion, it was the same only more so. We had everything. In every town or locality one could find people of a dozen or more denominations and faiths. All Terribly intent, of course, on setting up their own types of work. Thus divided, the church groups could not help but be small, and the activities so limited by lack of leadership and funds that much so-called religious work was of very poor quality.

In addition to the many churches, the new country seemed to have attracted an unusual quanitity of independent preacher and evangelists, faith healing, holiness, and sanctification were rampant. Highly emotional sects varied on so wildly and

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In addition to the many churches, the new country seemed to have attracted an unusual quantity of independent preacher and evangelists, faith healing, holiness, and sanctification were rampant. Highly emotional sects varied on an wildly and

foolishly as to be fairly disgraceful to the name of religion. But it seemed, in the conglomerate of peoples who first settled here, that all such activity prospered and it took years for such social waters as we had in Oklahome to settle and clarify.

Prejudices and sectionalism were troublesome in many things, but especially in the schools and churches. Northerners and Southerners were about equally mixed, and still bitter. Not only were we a borderland geographically, but the loyalties and ties of our settlers knew no boundaries. Sometimes it was difficult to believe a civil war was not raging.

The Methodist Church was a good example of this. The M. E. Church and the methodist Church South, with identical doctrines and policies, were organized side by side in every village and hamlet, scarcely ever was there room for even one good church. Northern and Southern Baptists and Northern and Southern Presbyterians were nearly as bad. Deciples of Christ and the Church of Christ quarreled over their differences with equal violence. And many more. All these clashing ideas created as great a problem as wild men, wild animals or wild conditions could have done on any frontier.

Then people from so many places had so many ways of doing things. You could see it in the kitchen, in the shop, in the fields. Of course, there existed the finest possible chance to learn form each other. But it seemed a great many people were too contrary to want to learn. There was too great a kick to be had in belittling the other fellow's methods and ideas, in laughing at his mannerisms and in speaking ill of him to one's neighbors.

Farmers from everywhere came into the country intent on farming just as they had "back yonder." They could not altogether be blamed for this, there was no precedent in the new country, no one had been before them to make the mistakes. So, whether they went in for cotton, wheat, corn or livestock, they all had their problems, for years agriculture was in quite a mess and there were many failures.

Lacking any kind of organization at the beginning, people still felt a need for social relationship, humans are gregarious after a fashion in any situation. So we tried to organize groups for getting together. Singing schools, literary societies, dramatic clubs, even simple parties and dances. But it was laughable, only rather pitiful too, how many of us were lost and hardly knew what to do or how to conduct ourselves, because we felt we were different from everyone else. And though we all professed to speak English, many of the dialects were hardly understandable, one by the other.

This in a feeble way sets up something of a picture of the first settlement in Oklahoma. Perhaps, it would not be amiss to call it Oklahoma's frontier.

But there was another very real difference between this frontier and any other. We came together here as strangers and in the beginning all was chaos. But it did not take generations for us to get acquainted. It soon became evident that the cosmos was not nearly so far away as one might have supposed in the beginning. We were not so ignorant or backwoods, or off side as some seemed to think, or as some writers have presented us. In fact, we were just about as civilized as the states from which we came and actually, we went forward by leaps and bounds. In a few years, we had homes, towns and cities just as did the rest of the country. And our schools and churches soon reached the point where they could look up at each other, or at themselves without blushing.

I have read two or three books and numerous articles, which have tried, in one respect or another, to describe these early times, and I have been more than a little provoked that so many have seemingly tried to leave the impression that the earliest settlers here were a pretty bad lot. Made up largely of three kinds of undesirables, to wit; Outlaws, hillbillies and refugees from the slums. To all of which, I w ant to say emphatically, it was not so.

They were not all rich, no highly educated, nor of the so called upper crust. But by and large, they were good people. Once in a while there was an outlaw, or a social nuesance or a bully, who was not needed, but such persons need not come from the ignorant and underprivileged. They were just as likly to be from one class as another, and the very best of folks could be found every where.

In some sections there was a great deal of illiteracy. This was not always the fault of the people, and as a whole, they were not bad people. I should like to illustrate what I mean by a little story of my own experience.

The first year after the settlement of Oklahoma, I reached a major milestone in my life. I decided to try to prepare myself for doing religious work, or perhaps, to made it my life's calling. The church consented to put me into certain work right away. This, I kept up right along while I was attending school. It brought me into different communities where I came in contact with all classes and kinds of people. After a good many years of this, I came to the conclusion I had run across about as many undesirables in one strata of society as in any other, and that most of the people were not a bad sort any where you found them.

At one time, I served a community of the most illiterate and lowly people we had any where in the territory. They lived in a wooded section, many of them in log cabins. They were principally cotton farmers and a great many could neither read nor write. But it was gratifying to find that their sense of right and wrong was as acute as that of people in the so called best communities. I stayed with them in their cabins, ate at their tables, slept in their beds, and on their floors, found them a fine, high type of people. I will mention one family much like many another.

The name was Price. They lived in a one room log house with one door which stood open most of the time to admit light and fresh air. But a cheerful fire was always going in the chimney across the room and I was always welcome. I visited them often, ate and slept in their home, talked with them at great length. They made me feel refreshed and happy when I went away. Mr. Price and his wife were about forty years old, and at the time, had four children; I never knew more wholesome people.

Of course, there were some decidedly worthless people in that neighborhood and some ugly things happened around there sometimes. But in the year and a half that I was working there, I think I never heard Mr. Price speak unkindly of anything or anyone. When an unfortunate person or incident had to be mentioned, he always spoke with the greatest kindness and charity. It would cause me often to think, how little does wholesome goodness depend on wealth, learning or station in life. A good man is true gold anywhere he may be found. And truely, in the words of Burns:

"The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
The mass is the gold, for a' that."

So I have nothing but praise and commendation for the people who first settled our state. Settled Oklahoma, stayed here, and in, Oh, so short a time lifted a perfectly untamed region into a state so fine and honorable as to make any union proud.

Chapter XXll

The Territory Grows

While we remained Norman, Pa waiting for better things, John and I going to school, and the girls getting married, much more important events were developing. As everyone had well recognized, the newly settled territory could not long re main isolated. But of first consideration was the development of a government for it.

Towns within the area soon organized some sort of local self-government and did a fair job of maintaining order without sanction from higher authority. Congress met that Dec. but it seemed to attack the problem with indifference, and it was not until May, more than a year after the opening, that it passed the bill creating the Territory of Oklahoma. This bill provided that the "No Man's Land" which is now the Panhandle, should be a part of the territory, though it was completely separated from the rest of it by Indian lands. A straw in the wind? The first addition had taken place.

The next was to be the reservations of the Iowa, Sac and Fox and Shawnee-Pottawatomie which adjoined us on the east The same act, which had made possible the original opening of the "Unassigned Lands", had provided for the creation of a commission with the function of negotiation with the Indians for the cession of their surplus lands so that white settlement might expand. This commission was eventually responsible bor the opening of all the reservations west of the Five Civilized Tribes.

First objective of the commission was to obtain the settlement of the Cherokee Outlet, the high plains country of the northwest and considered by many to be the prize of the whole section. But the Cherokees had had a long and bitter history of negotiations with Washington commissions and were extremely reluctant to make further concessions. In addition to that, the cattlemen of the Outlet, were paying good rent and were offering twice the government price of a dollar and a quarter an acre if the Indians could get permission to sell to private parties.

So the commission turned it's attention to other matters and shortly made arrangements with the Iowa, Sac and Fox, and Shawnee-Pottawatonie tribes to distribute lands to their members and cede the surpluses to the govennment. And on September 22, 1891, this country was opened to settlement.

It was only a few miles east to the "Pot" country border and we had hunted there a good deal. We knew the country well and we liked it as hunting territory, but it did not appeal to us as farm land. It was a country of rough sand hills and jack oaks and looked decidedly unpromising to devotees of the praisie.

Chapter XXII

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But more from curiosity than anything else, and with almost no notion of attempting to stake a claim , some of us went over. We drove out from Norman that morning, my father Ben Walcher and Charlie Kahoe in the wagon. I rode a long legged sorrel pony that Pa had taken in paymentfor a well digging job he and Ben had done for the butcher down town. Hank would have been ripe for any such adventure, but he was spending that fall in Kansas working for Al Walcher, helping to put in the wheat crop.

Charlie Kahoe had been married to Orana for over a year and they harbored visions of rural bliss if they could take a claim some place. I suspect they were fortunate that they never did. For Charlie was a skilled workman with an assured income and he certainly was no farmer. I question that he ever could have been staisfied trying to be. He was no horseman either, he willingly rode in the wagon.

A new townsite had been selected almost straight east of Norman, laid out in lots, designated as a county seat, and called Tecumseh. There was no earthly reason for it's location, there was no railroad, no trading post or important trail crossing. Apparently, the land office had stuck a pin in a map, possibly, on a point thought to be the center of the prospective county, and said this is it. At any rate, Tecumseh was born. And that was the spot for which we headed.

In this rugged country, a person traveled on the established trails or he almost did not travel. A Horseman could, of course, wind around through the hills and timber, but more than likely he would shortly be lost. So there was not the concerted stampede across a boundary line that exemplfies the opening of Oklahoma. There were a good many people at the trail entrance at the noon deadline, but mostly they took their places in line and moved forward in a reasonably orderly procession along the road toward Tecumseh.

Nor was it easy to find an available claim. This country was not all open to settlement as had been the Unassigned Lands. Much of the country had been allotted to the Indians and what was left over might be tucked away in the timber any where. It was a confusing and discouraging prospect.

I left the wagon and struck out for myself, but saw nothing in which I was interested. We got back together at Tecumseh and decided to spend the rest of the day around there mostly just watching the people.

There were plenty of them, and they created some excitement. We witnessed one fight over a lot, one of the most vicious and blood curdling things I ever saw. I thought we were seeing murder done, but it turned out to be mostly smoke and little fire.

We had come upon the scene wholely unexpected just as the argument was reaching a climax. Something of a crowd had already gathered. It seems two men had found themselves in possession, or perhaps, I should say partial possession, of the same lot. One had an axe in his hands with which he had been driving stakes to mark his claim. While we were still in the process of finding out the reason for the crowd and the argument, this protagonist suddenly raised his axe and with a lunge and full swing, brought it down on the spot where the other's head had been. It would almost have split him open from head to foot had it landed, and I gasped with the suddenness and viciousness of the attack. But the intended victim stepped aside and the axe swung on through empty air. The crowd quickly stepped between and held the two until hot blood could cool a bit.

Ben or Charlie, I do not now remember which, found some lots and decided to stake them. I do not know what ultimately became of them, but we took the wagon that afternoon to bring in some poles from the woods so that we could build a framework for a little shack as evidence of occupency and good intent.

As evening came on, the crowd began to thin out, people realizing they could not spend the night in Tecumseh with no food or water. Unlike Norman in the previous run, there was no boarding house, no railroad to bring in supplies, not even a well. But there was a settlement not too far away. Old Shawnee Town Mission had been operating for many years among the Indians. Established by the Quakers, it lay three or four miles north near the North Canadian River. This seemed the only haven for those unprepared to sustain themselves, and it and the river were about the only sources of water.

We, of course, were well equipped for camping out, but we joined the crowd in the general drift northward. We found a nice spot in the river bottom and camped for the night. The next day was spent in rather aimless wandering about, watching the crowd and talking with any who might feel as idle and unnecessary as we. In the afternoon, we started toward home, spending another night camped in the black jacks on the way.

Here again was demonstrated our lack of foresight in not recognizing potential value. Much of this country has become valuable farm land and with a real effort, we could have taken some of it. This attitude was further emphasized the following spring, when, on the nineteenth of April the huge Cheyenne-Arapaho country was opened to settlement. This time we did not even go. Most of it was far away to the west, and we knew it to be a dry country and much of it rough. It did not sound good to us.

But we were really waiting for the opening of the Cherokee Outlet. The commission had not dropped it's efforts to obtain this great territory of more than six million acres. Failing by an legitimate means to negotiate with the Cherokees

the government finally, arbitrarily and without sound justification, ordered the cattlemen to remove their herds from the area. Being thus deprived of revenud from their lands, the Indians, as was anticipated, finally agreed to negotiate.

We had grown to maturity in southern Kansas near the border of the "Strip," We had hunted it for years and knew it as we would know our own farm. We all liked it and were determined to secure some homesteads there. The opening was scheduled for September 16, 1893.

The land office had not yet handed down it's decision concerning the homestead at Norman, but by this time, there was considerable evidence that it might go against my father. With that prospect in view, he wanted very much to take another claim in the Strip. By virtue of some law concerning veterans of the Union army, it seems he was entitled to take and hold two claims if he so desired. So we began to make preparations, looking forward to this event.

In contrast to the opening of the Unassigned Lands where there was thirty days from proclamation to opening, and the Pot Country when there was only four, the nation was given plenty of time for preparation. We knew it would be a wide open race with a great many entrants. And we knew we could not hope to be as well mounted as many others, but we determined to do the best we could.

We owned a team of small mares, Jennie and Fannie, too light, really, for the race but we had faith in them. They were just ponies of western stock. Fannie was a chesnut and had, under John's training and riding, asquired quite a reputation locally as a race horse. The boys of Norman and vicinity engaged considerably in racing, using for a track the straight stretch of open road running north from town to the cemetary. At races up to half a mile, John and Fannie had beaten every local horse pitted against them.

But this was to be a race of indurance rather than speed. We did not have proof that our little mares could take it. In order to lighten their loads as much as possible, we determined to ride them without saddles. Again Charlie Kahoe was going, mostly just because the rest of us were. He and I were about the smallest of the crowd so we drew the smallest horses. I made a pad to sit on, with stirrups, so I was not so badly equipped. But Charlie, poor fellow, the only bad rider in the bunch, thought he could get by with nothing. I wonder now why those of us with supposedly wiser heads in the matter of horsemanship, ever let him try it.

Hank bought a fine mare especially for the trip, picking her out of a shipment of wild horses just in from the range. He called her Red Elm, for what reason I never knew, except that she was a rather red bay. And wild she was. He got her only about a month before the race and it took him most of

that time to get her to the point where anyone could stay on her back.

Ben had his team, Bill and Babe. He would ride Bill, of course. That left Babe, but we needed three horses, one for Pa and a team for the wagon. Hohn, not yet of age and therefore ineligible to take a claim, was going along to drive the wagon with our supplies. But that problem was not hard to solve. We wanted to come in from the north anyway, an and we knew someone from Kansas would want to go along, or if they did not, there would be horses there we could use.

Probably we were not wise in coming in from the North. That was where nearly everyone else would be, since they would come in from the eastern part of the country, few would come up through the Indian and Oklahoma Territories to enter from the south. But the land we wanted was near the upper edge and we delt that this time we would be prepared for taking it. So we were little worried by the competition.

We spent several weeks in training our mounts. Extra rations of oats, extra grooming and long daily rides at a fast pace, gradually put them in top condition. They were prepared to give us all they had, and we felt it would be quite enough.

About ten days before the date, we shipped up to Arkansas City by rail. We chartered a box car and built in a cross rail to keep the horses in one end. The wagon was dismantled and packed into the other and, together with our camp outfit and about fifty bushels of oats in sacks for the horses.

We precipitated quite a little consternation among the switching crews in the Norman yards by spotting our car our selves and being loaded and ready to go while they were looking everywhere else but there for the car. Being long familiar with railroading, we thought nothing of the job of pinchbarring it into position by the loading platform and did not realize we were creating a crisis in their operating procedures.

Pa and Charlie were to come up later on the train, just prior to the run. Ben was selected to travel with the car and look after the stock. Only one man was permitted for this, and that left three of us to get there the best way we could. But we had that all figured out well in advance.

In those days, the practice of traveling by freight train was quite prevalent. Cowboys, farmers, drummerd and just plain bums, there was always someone on every train who was not supposed to be there. They rode inside and outside, on top and underneath, there were plenty of places a man could ride but few where he would not be found. The train crews always searched diligently for these chiselers, the dirty bums, trying to sneak a free ride off the railroad.

Yes, they searched them out, but not for the purpose of putting them off. They had that right of course, and the duty, but it was much more profitable to extract a tribute, whatever the traffic would bar, to be split up among the crew at the end of the run. So there were very few unauthorized riders actually put off, but, likewise, very few who actually rode free.

We planned to be unauthorized riders all right, but we intended to be free ones, also, if it were at all possible. In loading our equipment, we saw to it that the wagon bed was turned over and somewhat propped up by the sacks of oats so as to provide a very comfortable hiding place with easy entrance and exit. Then just prior to departure, it was just about dusk when the train pulled out, we slipped into the car and under the wagon box.

At every stop along the way, a brakeman came along to check the car. He would chat with Ben about the prevalince of bums on the road, they had to be careful to check all the places where one might hide. Ben would agree with his condemnation of those who would cheat the railroad, and they became great pals as the train wended it's way through the night. The man finally admitted to Ben that any money collected from such persons was split up among the crew. But we never got vaught outside our sanctuary and no one sneezed at the wrong time. We arrived in Arkansas City safe and sound some time before daylight.

Ben managed to have the car spotted at a dock and once more we had all our work done before the railroad crew knew we had started. When they came to check Ben out, we were already unloaded and ready to travel. No one inquired as to where Ben got all the help.

Now we proceeded to the Illinois Community in Sumner County to complete our party and plans. Big Al Walcher was riding with us, and two of the Wynn boys. Little Ed Wynn, like John, too young to take a claim, would drive another wagon. Rush Walcher owned a big, strong two year old he would send along for Pa to ride, and Al brought an extra to put in our team with Babe.

Some years before our departure from the farm in Kansas, Al had married Lidonia Wynn. We had known all the family of old but this in a sense, made them (Wynn's) our relatives as well.

We were now all set, a party of eight riders and two wagons.. And there was a reason for the large group. Our experiences in previous openings had proven the value of witnesses. We were determined to have them this time.

With the view to elimination of some of the evils created by the Sooners in previous openings, the land office in Washington decreed that all who were to enter, must register

ahead of the run and must carry on their persons, certificates of that registration on the day of the opening and when filing upon the land. In order to carry out this regulation, it named several places along the line where enrollment booths should be set up, and allowed three days just prior to the run for it to be accomplished. The old border town of Hunnewell, Kansas was one such designated point, and it was there we decided to go.

There were thousands of people there, I suspect a great many more than had been anticipated. We arrived before the registration started, but the crowd was so large that the work went very slowly. As soon as it could be done, the long lines of people were organized into companies of twenty-five with a captain for each company. This would enable the members of each group to maintain their positions in line by a single representative, while the rest were free to come and go as they pleased.

I was appointed captain of a group which included our party. This was a rank with little honor, since it mostly meant that I spent more time in the line than anyone else. We had to camp there in the line for the first day and night and into the next afternoon. But we accomplished the enrollment in time that day to get our outfit assembled and moved to a point on the border some ten miles east of town. Here we rested in camp the last night before the opening and were in good shape, and position to begin the big race.

The morning of the opening dawned clear, calm and warm, a little too warm for the tremendous ordeal of violent action that lay before us. We were fully aware of the weaknesses of horse flesh, and we thought we knew how to spare our mounts as well as the nexr man. So the weather did not worry us, it only made matters a little harder for all concerned.

We inquired of riders coming in as to whether the registration ever was completed. The report was that it had been, but that the booths had stayed open all night to accomplish it.

The authorities had designated a neutral strip of land a hundred feet wide just over the state line on which all participants might assemble. This was to avoid as much as possible, any damage to the property of individuals in the state of Kansas, and to provide starting places for all of as nearly equal convenience as possible.

We happened to be located near the top of a ridge which afforded us an excellent view of the multitude for at least a half mile in both directions. The neutral strip seemed completely filled with people, horses and vehicles of one kind and another as far as we could see. There were many excellent horses, thorough breds trained for the job ahead and far better than any we could boast. There were, also, many draft

horses off the farms, quite unfit for the race. There were many light vehicles, two and four wheeled, some with one horse drawing them, some with two. A few men were there on bicycles.

At twelve o'clock, the signal guns were fired and the whole mass sprang into motion. A truly great spectacle, such as one is likely to see only once in a lifetime. Here and there, a single rider dashed quickly ahead, but for the most part, the mass moved out with a kind of regularity and restrained speed that seemed to say, in action if not in words, "We know we are in for a great race and much will depend upon how we ride it."

As for our own party, our agreement to stay together was not as easy an accomplishment as one might suppose. Rush's horse made trouble for Pa at once. He was highly bred and inclined to nervousness, and seemed scared to death of the great crowd and confusion. He went off with an uncontrolable dash that carried him clear of the crowd and of us. For a time Pa was lost, but he soon got his mount under control and in the course of a mile or so, was able to draw back and locate the rest of us. He reported that he had been in the clear, well out in front of everyone, before he could take charge and slow down.

Hank's horse, too, was a problem. Insufficiently broken, she went wild in the melee of getting under way and tried both to throw her rider and to run away with him. But Hank was equal to the occasion and able to keep his seat and regain control. Charlie, also, nearly lost his seat in the start. Fannie jumped from the post like a scared rabbit and Charlie, without saddle to hold on to, was rocked back hard. We always kidded him that we say daylight across her withers and under his feet. But he managed to find something to cling to and soon got straightened out with the rest of us.

We got together shortly and progressed calmly and steadily, mostly at a long lope, that ate up the miles.

About six or seven miles into the race, we came across a man standing beside the trail. A horse which was unabe to rise, lay on the ground beside him. We drew rein to see if our help was needed, but he simply waved us on and shouted, "Don't mind me, Boys, thank you. I will hold this claim right here if I can. Go right on, and good luck to you." His horse had stepped into a ditch beside the road, had fallen and broken a leg. It would never get up. We saw the man no more.

Some ten of twelve miles along, we came upon a large work horse lying dead by the trail. No owner was in sight, apparently, he had gone on a foot. The horse was not a fit animal for such an event. His rider had simply pushed him too hard and he had dropped out of the race dead. a great

many horses, both good and bad, went out the same way that day.

After a half hour or so, we began to notice that every time we passed a little creek or a clump of brush, we would find horses running beside us which had not been there before. These animals were hardly sweating at all, while ours were in a lather. We soon began to understand that the registration plan had failed miserably in it's purpose, that men who had registered the first day, or the second, had departed quietly, and for two days had been slipping over the border and hiding out in secluded spots. From those stations, they could emerge unobserved and join the rush as it swept past. Thus, while starting on a par with the leaders of the crowd, they had fresh horses to give them a great advantage.

However, these were the timid Sooners. Their bolder brothers were yet out in front. At the end of an hour of riding, we had reached the Chikaskia River just north of where the city of Blackwell now stands. We rode into the water, dismounted and wet the mouths and heads of our horses. They were too hot and excited to drink, but we let them breathe two or three minutes while we counciled as to the next move.

We had expected this to be near the end of our journey. We had thought we would spread out and find claims in this valley, and we knew we had ridden well enough to be ahead of the drowd. But we had only to look around to see that we were not. All the bottom lands seemed covered three or four deep already. These people could not have started at the border at twelve as we did. Most of them could not even be those who had joined us along the way. They had beaten us to the desirable farms, but most of them had been there well ahead of our start at the Kansas line.

This was a bitter disappointment to us all. Al and the others from Kansas decided they had gone far enough, if they could find no claim in this bottom, they did not want one at all. We left them there to turn up river and spend the rest of the day in an effort to uncover something the crowd might have over-looked.

The rest of us wanted to push on. We had come too far and worked too hard to be willing to admit defeat this early in the game. It was another ten or twelve miles straight ahead to the Salt Fork. So we were off in a few minutes on the second leg of the journey. This was covered about as successfully as the first dash, but, upon arrival, we found the Salt Fork bottoms, also, completely filled with people. We were convinced by now that the whole country had been Soonered, we were disparing of vere finding a suitable claim.

We had entered the race approximately at the point where a well defined road led into the Territory. This was a trail down into the reservations of the Tonkawas and Poncas. For

the first hour and a half or so, we rode along or near this trail. Midway betweeen the two rivers, we had swung to the west and come to the Salt Fork considerably above the trail crossing. We then turned upstream to explore the valley until we crossed Deer Creek. Here we found deeper water than in either of the rivers, the horses waded through with water above stirrup level. But we found no unoccupied land.

Sonewhere between the rivers, Charlie had given up. His lack of skill in riding, his lack of saddle and his disgust at the turn of events proved too much. He told us he could take it no more. We stopped to consider. Fannie had stood the ordeal in splendid fashion, and Pa decided that he would like to have her for the rest of the trip since Charlie was not going on. He switched his saddle and we fixed up the two year old with a blanket we had brought for just such an emergency. Charlie would have a little padding, if not a saddle, and he could walk or ride slowly on his way back to find the wagons.

Not knowing anything else to do, we pushed on. Across the river and out on to the high, open prairie. Several miles beyond the river, we finally began to clear the crowd. We stopped to reconnoiter at a well defined corner stone we chanced to spot. From the markings thereon, and our maps, we took our bearings. W e had been two hours and a half in the race and we seemed to have ridden since leaving the Kansas line some thirty-five miles. This was more than half way across the Strip. We had not found what we wanted and by this time, we were convinced we were not going to. To continue on meant to come closer and closer to the south boundary; who knew what crowd might be coming in from there.

The day was well along, our horses were tired. There seemed no alternative but to decide now whether we wanted this or nothing. We knew we did not want it. We looked around for some time and almost rode away without any move to take a claim. Some one of the group observed that we might as well stake something just in case we wanted it to fall back on later. So two of us stepped a few yards away in opposite directions from our corner stone and sank our stakes into the ground.

We started back slowly and dejectedly. We had hopes of contacting the wagons somewhere along the trail, though the drivers could not have been expected to have the faintest idea where we were. Our horses, by now, were very thirsty. We got back to the Salt Fork and they wanted to fill themselves with the brackish water. We thought it unsafe so permitted them only two or three gallons each, and made them wait until we could locate something better.

We crossed the river, but now it was night and still no wagons. Beyond the ridge and into the Chikaskia basin

we found a tiny stream with clear, running water, a few small trees and green grass along it's banks. Our mounts greatly enjoyed the water, as did we. We unsaddled the horses and staked them on the grass with our lariets, too our saddles and blankets and went into camp for the night. We were weary, hungry and disappointed, but the evening was calm, the sky clear, and the breeze gently and warm. The stars were very bright and all the night beautiful. At least these things did not disappoint us. And we slept.

Chapter XXIII

After The Race

We had wanted very much to get some farms from this Strip Opening. We had entered the great race and had lost. What next? We were confused and did not know.

In one thing we remained steadfast, and pitifully wrong. The two claims we had staked out on the high rolling plain were good farms. All that upland country proved to be. But in our disappointment, that day they did not look good to us. Though we did go back after locating the wagons and run furrows around them. But they still did not look worthwhile and no one in the whole group of eight, thought well enough of them to go back later, file on them and prove up a homestead. So they were abandoned to whatever lucky settler came along later with foresight enough to recognize potential value when he saw it.

We stayed around for several days, mostly out of curiosity as to what other people were doing. We found out that nearly everyone we contacted was in the same fix as we were. They, too, had failed. A typical case was that of two men with whom we had a long interview. They had entered the race from about the same point we had. They were much better mounted, their horses appeared to be thoroughbred Hamiltonians. They said they rode hard and their horses did not falter. They kept trying to outrun the crowd and crossed the Salt Fork, twenty-one or two miles from the line in just one hour. But they found no place where all the desirable land was not already staked and double staked. Finally they had become disgusted and turned back.

It was apparent that not only had many registrants jumped the gun, but that many others had come in even ahead of the registration. The guard had been wholely inadequate or ineffic ient. Non-registrants, of course, could not file on any claim they held. But a very large percentage of the people in the country were again in the race merely as a matter of speculation. There was no authority present to put an unregistered claimant off his land, and there was nothing to prevent his selling his rights, if he could persuade someone that he had rights, to the highest bidder.

Thus, much of the country had been illegally claimed and improperly staked. But most such occupants well knew the shakiness of their positions and were ready to get out from under. Thousands upon thousands of claims changed hands within the next few days. We might easily have selected and purchased suitable farms in any section we desired. There was just one little catch, we were poor folks and had nothing with which to buy. We hardly had the resources with us to buy food for ourselves and feed for the horses.

But while we were not prepared to buy, to have done so would have been most distasteful, irrespective of financial considerations. We had entered the race in good faith. We felt we had been imposed upon by our fellowman and let down by our government. Ah, bitter dis-allusionment.

But--the morning after the race dawned bright and cares were laid away. We and our horses were well rested, though we had been forced to sleep under the stars without our equipment and without food. We saddled up and set out to find the wagons.

We chose as the most likely spot, the bottoms along the Chikaskia. These were literally full of people. We rode among them for more than an hour but did not find the boys with the wagons. So we decided they had pushed on to the Salt Fork. We doubled back once more and this time we had guessed right. We found them near some ranch buildings not far from the ford. At last we could get something to eat for ourselves and horses.

Whiteman's cattle had been removed from the Strip some time before and the ranch buildings were essentially abandoned. It seems to me that some one had been sent there, however, as a sort of caretaker in anticipation of the crowd of people which was swarming the countryside. And there was a well. Not many sources of water were available in the country other than in the streams, and the Salt Fork, itself, was no good.

The other riders, lost from us over the night, found their way to the wagons also. We all got together around noon for a good meal and a swapping of experiences. Their ifforts had been entirely fruitless insofar as finding desirable claims was concerned.

After organizing our affairs a little and satisfying our appetites, several of us drove one of the wagons out to where we had sgaked the claims the evening before. W e hunted the corner stones carefully so as to properly identify the lines. Then we put the team to a plow, which had been brought for this sole purpose, and ran out the boundary furrows.

By this time, the day was nearly gone. We drove back once more to the Salt Fork to camp for the second night, this time near the ranch house where we had found John and Ed with the wagons. It was another beautiful night. We had a tent but we did not bother to erect it. We spread out a wagon sheet on the grass beneath a group of trees, arranged our bedding upon the canvas and once again slept beneath the stars Our sleep was sound, as though all the world were our inheritance. Such is a part of the Pioneer's joy.

But we were a little puzzled about our future course.

I think before we slept that night, we talked the situation over and arrived at our plan. Nothing was as we had hoped and expected, so readjustments were in order.

Al and the Wynn boys decided to head back immediately for South Haven and home. Charlie Kahoe, too felt he had had enough and he went back with them to find his way home to Norman by way of Arkansas City and the railroad. But the rest of us wanted to see more of the country and it's new citizens, so we decided to take the one wagon and work westward. The new town of Enid, we knew, lay out to the west and a little south of us, some thirty-five miles or more. The Rock Island had run a new line down from Caldwell. We knew the new town was on the railroad and in the vicinity of the point where the Chisholm Trail crossed Skeleton Creek. We were in no hurry and we knew the country well. We wandered around quite a bit to find out what had happened to it. We found no place where the people had not come. It took about three days for us to reach Enid.

But now we were confused. There turned out to be two Enids. The government land office had designated a townsite, named it Enid, and decided it was to be a county seat. But it xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx seemed someone did not like it. Another town company had been organized and another town started two or three miles down the tracks. It was being called South Enid.

Now South Enid seemed to be the more populous place. Many had stopped at the north town but a great many more had gone on to the south town and were working hard to get a town started ahead of the other.

We tried to figure a way to get into the swing of events in Enid by acquiring some lots, b ut by this time, that was impossible without money, and we had none to spare.

In a day or two, Pa And Ben were ready to go home, but John, Hank and I wanted more exploration. After all John and I had missed a semester in college for this trip, we felt we should make the most of it. So Pa took the train and went back to Norman. Ben had been with us so long, he was like one of the family, but now he decided he ought to continue on to Sumner County and spend some time in the old neighborhood. So he too took the train and departed north.

We were all essentially without funds. Our canp stood on a little knoll overlooking the town; that is, if any slight rise in that almost perfectly flat country, may be referred to as a knoll. I stood there with Ben beside the wagon as we discussed our plans just before he left to go down to the station. He pulled out, what I knew to be practically his last cent except for train fare, a five dollar bill and handed it to me. It would help take care of the horses, he said, as he turned and walked brisquely away.

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Al and the Wynn boys decided to head back immediately for South Bayou and home. Cheelie Eaton, too felt he had enough and he went back with them to find his way home to Norman by way of Arkansas City and the railroad. But the rest of us wanted to see more of the country and it's new citizens, so we decided to take the one wagon and work westward. The new town of Enid, we knew, lay out to the west and a little south of us, some thirty-five miles or more. The Rock Island had run a new line down from Caldwell. We knew the new town was on the railroad and in the vicinity of the point where the Chisholm Trail crossed Skeleton Creek. We were in no hurry and we knew the country well. We wandered around quite a bit to find out what had happened to it. We found no place where the people had not come. It took about three days for us to reach Enid.

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We tried to figure a way to get into the swing of events in Enid by opening some [illegible], but it was impossible without money, and we had none to spare.

It a day or two, Pa And Ben were ready to go home, but John, Hank and I wanted more exploration. After all John and I had started a semester in college for this trip, we felt we should make the most of it. So Pa took the train and went back to Norman. Ben had been with us so long, he was like one of the family, but now he decided he ought to continue on to Custer County and spend some time in the old neighborhood. So he too took the train and departed north.

We were all essentially without funds. Our camp stood on a little knoll overlooking the town; that is, if any slight rise in that almost perfectly flat country, may be returned to as a knoll. I stood there with Ben beside the wagon as we discussed our plans just before he left to go down to the station. He pulled out, what I knew to be practically his last cent except for twelve cents, a five dollar bill and headed it to me. It would help take care of the horses, he said, as he turned and walked briskly away.

They left us with our one wagon and five head of horses. I cannot remember now why we thought it so important to stay, but we did. We knew we would soon be without provisions and that we had little money to buy more. It was rather early for the hunting season but we began to canvass the town to find someone who would engage some game. We located a restaurant operator who agreed to pay us five dollars for a dozen prairie chicken if we could bring them in. I am sure he did not expect us to find the birds or to come back. But we thought we could have some fun trying, so we made our plans to get out early the next morning.

Everything was fine when we went to bed that night, but before morning a quite considerab le storm came barreling down from the north. There was little rain but a great deal of wind. The tent collapsed on our beds. We pulled the poles out of the way, tightened the side ropes as best we could in the dark and the storm, c rept back under the canvas and into our beds to await the day.

Well, the day came, as it always has. And any given day in Oklahoma is likely to see the weather demonstrate it's versatility. So, of course, it was different again by morning. The storm was gone, the sun was shining and everything was refreshed. We broke camp, being aided by the fact that the tent was already down, put everything in the wagon, and struck out across the prairie to the west to find those prairie chickens.

But we had poor success. The great rush of people had disturbed and scattered everything that had lived in the country before. We wandered around for two days and here and there found a few birds. We came in with our catch the second evening. It amounted to only ten chickens and two ducks. We went around to see our friend. He greeted us warmly, said he was surprised that we got back at all and more surprised at the game. But he agreed he would use all the birds and gave us the five dollars.

Now we decided we had better get started home while the gettin' was good. Next morning we were on our way. Out adventures were not yet over, however.

With the original opening of Oklahoma, good many of the Walchers had come in and settled in a group in the vicinity of Crescent, northwest of Guthrie. None of these were our immediate cousins but they were all our mother's relatives. They included our long time neighbor in Sumner County, John A. Walcher and his family. His children, Little Al and Hattie were friends with which we had grown up. Most of the rest we did not know. We had known they were there, had come to refer to the place as the Walcher neighborhood. But we had never visited them. On the spur of the moment, we decided we would go home by way of Crescent and look them up.

We found them all right with a little inquiry, and they seemed glad to see us. We visited very pleasantly in the neighborhood for several days; there were some young people in several of the families whom we had never known, but whom we were glad to meet. Young and old were kind and hospitable, entertaining us with special dinners and suppers and parties in the various homes. We enjoyed our short visit very much and have always recalled it with happy memories.

In a few days, we hit the trail again, drifting toward home. We preceeded slowly, there was hunting country all along the way. By the time we reached Guthrie we were ab out out of provisions again and money also. But we had accumulated quite a little game along the way. It needed to go to market and we needed the money. I went to a supply store with a Winchester rifle to put up as security for a few staple groceries, found a box that would hold our game, and started it for Kansas City. Then we went out a few miles from town to camp and hunt, and leisurely bide our time until the check for the game got back to us. Then we were able to pay up and get our rifle and head for Norman once more.

Thus ended, for us, the greatest of all runs for homesteads in the OKlahoma country. It had been a big disappointment, but a great adventure.

Chapter XXXV

Farewell to The Strip

John and I had made no plans for attending school that fall. We had both been charter members of the University's classes when they opened for the first time the year before, 1892. We had every intention of continuing our studies. But the opening of the Cherokee Outlet had been the middle of September and we had expected to spend the winter up there living on claims.

No doubt the wise thing for us to have done following the race would have been to hurry home immediately and get enrolled, even if a little late. But we were in no mood for the wise thing following our disappointment in the run for land, and it never did take much persuasion to get a Hefley out for a camping and hunting expedition. Thus, we had put in our time, foolishly perhaps, until well along into October. When we got home, we felt it was too late to enroll.

The brick yard, which consumed much of Hank's time, and at which the rest of us worked in odd times, would be fairly inactive through the winter. And, of course, the farm would be also, so we were all more or less at loose ends for the moment.

I think my father was exasperated and somewhat restless over the ill-fortune which had seemed to dog his footsteps in all the land openings so far. His dress had never changed since he first left Illinois. He still saw somewhere in the west that hundred and sixty acres of land which he had started out to find so many years before. True enough, he thought he had found it; once in Kansas when drouth and the burden of eight children had taken it from him, and again at Norman where it now appeared imminent a non-understanding federal court would do likewise. So he could not yet see his goal, in fact, he was still only camping out.

Reports came to us that there was still much unclaimed land in the strip, particularly in the western half. While we were well aware that such lands would not be desirable, else they would have been occupied, we gradually became imbued with the idea that we should do some investigating to made sure. It could be that we saw a chance to comb ine some hunting with a trip of exploration. At any rate, we began to plan such a trip. It intrigued us far more than did the prospect of hunting a job.

We had the matter under advisement through the rest of October and by the second week in November, we decided we had wasted time enough. We quickly assembled our outfit and struck out. Our intent was to get back about Christmas time.

Ben Walcher, our most faithful companion in adventure, was still in Kansas, and John had acted most inadvisadly in

getting tied up with a job. That left just Hank, my father and me. We took the wagon and team, a tent, our guns and two bird dogs. We hoped to pick up enough game along the way to made the trip pay for itself.

We started north from Norman, crossing the North Canadian at Oklahoma City. From there we drifted north and west until we reached and crossed the Cimmarron west of Dover. Dover, we knew from years before as a station on the Chisholm Trail, but we did not stop to see what settlement of the country had done to it. From there, we followed the river to the northwest, staying north of it but following the general course of the jack oak timber which bordered the river bottom and covered the adjacent hills along it's course far to the west. This was all familiar country to us until we reached a point some twenty-five miles beyond Big Turkey Creek. This put us about the same distance southwest of Enid and fifteen to twenty miles into the Strip.

We were traveling slowly and had been out ten days or so. We would need more supplies soon and had accumulated a little game which needed to go to market. So we found a good place for a more or less permanent camp and arranged for Pa to stay by himself for a few days while Hank and I drove into Enid. We would dispose of our game and stock up for the continuation of our trip to the West.

We started into town the day before Thanksgiving. We found it a longer and rougher trip than we had anticipated, and night came on while we were still some eight or ten miles from our destination. So we stopped in a little hollow and spent the night camped on the open prairie.

The wind was from the north and the westher prospects were anything but good. We had left the tent for Pa, of course, but we spread down the wagon sheet on the ground, made our bed on the south end of it, pulled the north half over and anchored it down the best we could. We crept in and slept fine all night. The storm was building up and was worse in the morning, but no rain or snow had yet fallen.

We drove into town and put up the wagon and team in a camp yard. Most of the rest of the day was consumed before we had completed our business, so we decided to spend the night in town rather than take a chance on spending a night in the open in a blizzard. We slept that night in a vacant stall of the stables there in the camp yard.

In those days every town had one or more livery stables and at least one of these establishments had a camp yard where they could accomodate travelers as well as their wagons and teams. Perhaps accomodate is not the word. But there was always a well; that was necessary for the stock, and half block or more of ground where a party could pitch a tent, or sleep in it's wagon, or just roll up in blankets on the ground. There was generally a supply of wood or coal for a fire and most such places had a camp house, perhaps sixteen by twenty-

four, with a cook stove and bunks ranged around the walls. There was no privacy but a bunch of cowboys or hunters cared little for that. So there might be three or four groups bedded down in the camp house at the same time.

We slept all right that Thanksgiving night, but the norther kept getting worse and the next mornign, there were several inches of snow on the ground. An inch or so of it had sifted through the cracks of the board roof and neatly covered our bed. But we crawled out and packed the wagon for departure.

We cooked our breakfast there in the camp house. The snow had stopped by the time we were ready and we took the trail back to camp. With an earlier start and a knowledge of the route, we made it this time by about dusk. Pa and the camp had weathered the storm all right and we all holed up for a couple of days more until the weather warmed up a bit.

Now we moved out slowly to the westward until we came to the mouth of Eagle Chief Creek. The creek came down from the north and joined the river just opposite a group of hills known as the Glass Mountains. Here we crossed the river and spent a night in camp at the base of the principle mountain. Cantonment, the old I ndian campaign military post, lay another day's journey to the south, and we decided to put in there as a matter of exploration and education.

All these features of the country were new to us now. We knew little about them, but they could be identified from the rather meager maps of the area which were available at the time and one of which we carried. Each new point of interest was sought out on the map and identified, and we looked upon each find with the avid interest of explorers in an unknown land. Which, in fact, we were.

Nowhere did we find a prospect for homesteading which looked attractive to us. Most of the land, and all the good claims, had been staked, though there were very few people in the country now. It seemed most of them had staked, and supposedly filed on, claims and gone back to their homes, some where, expecting to return in the spring. The country was wide open and we could go almost anywhere we pleased without interference.

It had all been over-run and the game had scattered. Most of the prairie chicken had been scared from the prairies, gone we knew not where. The wild turkeys had entirely disappeared. We did find an occasional deer, generally hidden out in the most in-accessable places. But we continued to hunt some all the time.

Somewhere in the wandering, we did manage to kill one deer. Pa jumped two together but could get no shot. Hank was out with him a few hundred yards away and behind a ridge.

Fortunately, the running deer passed close to him and one crossed an open spot where he could get a good shot. On what had so far been a lean trip, this made a big difference in our meat supply.

A day or two later, we met another outfit. They reported that their supplies were low and asked if we had any meat. Hank told them that we sure had and asked how they were fixed for flour. They had plenty, so we skinned out a quarter of the deer for them while they were digging out a couple of gallons of flour. Both expeditions, thus, went their separate ways the happier for having met.

We got down to Cantonment, looked over the Indian Village that was then there, and then took a northwesterly course up the North Canadian River toward Woodward. We were still moving slowly, exploring where the spirit moved ut to explore, hunting where the prospects looked good. About fifteen miles below Woodward, we foung a good spot to camp with good country for hunting and pulled up to spend several days. Again, we had little game on hand, so when we got camp set up, I drove into town with the wagon and team and got the game started to Kansas City. When I got back to camp, the next day Pa and Hank had scouted out the surrounding hills. They found considerable sign of game but had not, as yet, picked up much. One memorable thing had happened, however. Pa had come upon a large brown eagle sitting in a tree within rifle range. Whether the killing of an eagle was to be commended is a debatable question, but in those days, everyone on the frontier considered them preditors. At any rate, he did kill it, a rather rare occurrence. It was a fine specimen, very large and beautiful.

The next morning our horses were gone. They had managed to pull up the stakes to which they were tethered, and had wandered off down the river some distance in a quest for better pasture. It took us most of that day to find them and get back to camp.

But in the process, we had noticed considerable deer sign in some hilly jack oak country a half mile or so from camp and had decided on a course of action for the next day. Before daylight we had the team hitched to the wagon and had driven out into that timber. We unhitched and tied the team to the wagon and spread out to take stations for still-hunting

We had been out only a half hour or so when two men rode through and spotted one of us. To our very great surprise, these men proved to be deputy marshals of some sort, and their mission seemed to be to catch hunters. It had never dawned on us that we could be violating any law, but it seems we were We were all arrested on some sort of John Doe warrant which they carried. We could not quite figure out the crime ofwhich we were supposed to be guilty; certainly we had not bothered anyone, but we had to go along with them just the same.

During all the years, the Strip Country had belonged to the Indians, it had technically been against the law for us to hunt there. Not that anyone really objected to the hunting, but it was the obligation of the government to prevent any unauthorized persons from entering the Indian lands. Most of the time we came and went as we pleased, as did everyone else, but periodically, some incident would occur which caused a temporary tightening of the regulations. Indians we met in the country never showed any hostility, but sometimes the soldiers did.

Such was the situation the last winter we hunted before leaving the farm in Kansas. This was my first winter out of school and I certainly did not intend to leave off the hunting because of some silly regulation.

My father and Ben Walcher, Jap Jones and I were together one trip when it was decided to send the wagon home with the game and to pick up additional supplies. We had several deer and a quantity of prairie chicken. These later were packed in two barrels, each about half full. Pa and Ben took off with the wagon while Jap and I stayed in camp. Somewhere south of the border, they were stopped by a band of soldiers which was patrolling for just such persons. The soldiers questioned them about their reasons for being in the country and then discovered the deer. It made Pa and Ben awfully mad when the party decided to confiscate the game. Ben said he had his rifle in his hand all the time and was ready to go into action any time Pa gave the word. But Pa was not one to initiate a gun fight over anything so unimportant; nor with U.S. Soldiers over anything. So the soldiers took the deer, though they never discovered the prairie chicken.

Later that same year, we were on our way down for another hunt when we got word in Hunnewell that the soldiers were pretty thick along the border. So we stayed in town until dark, then drove all night before stopping, clear down to the Salt Fork where we thought we would be safely beyond their patrols.

But this was different. Now there was not even the Indian law involved and we were hunting in all innocence, but it seemed we were doing something wrong.

We hitched up the team, drove back to camp and loaded our outfit into the wagon, and drove into Woodward. All well supervised, of course. Our escort led us into a shack; they called it the Court house. At any rate, it did contain a county judge and an attorney. They stood us up and read the charge, "Hunting on land that was not our own," and asked what we had to say about it.

We conferred amon g ourselves a little, decided there was nothing to be done or said but to tell the truth. I got appointed spokesman by some process of buck-passing, so I

went up to the judge and just told him why we were out and what we had been doing. I frankly admitted that, according to the charge just read, we were guilty; that we had been hunting some and that the land certainly was not our own. I protested that we did not know it belonged to anyone else, that we regarded it as public domain and were unaware that we were violating any law.

He asked a few questions about where we had been, where we were going, and what we had done with the game we had killed. I was not sure I should tell him we had sold game a few days before, so I countered by explaining that we had killed only one deer on the entire trip and only a few birds, and that three hungry men and two dogs made short work of such meager supplies.

He now came to the point of passing sentence. He stated that we had violated the law and would have to be punished for it, he would have to assess a small fine. After a bit of haggling, he agreed to make it light, only a dollar a piece and costs. And, surprisingly enough, he would allow us to sell the chickens and quail we had on hand to help pay the fine.

The fines and costs came to twenty-one dollars. We thanked the judge but explained again that we had very little game on hand and very little money as well. But we would see what we could to to raise the fines. By this time, it was evening and we arranged with him to let us go to the wagon yard for the night.

We were in a jam. We knew no one in that part of the country and knew of no easy way we could contact anyone. But luck sometimes rides with folks who cannot, otherwise, provide for themselves, and it was with us now.

A few days before when I had come to town, I had written a card home to let the folks know where we were. I added that we planned to stay in that vicinity for several days.

When we left the Court Room, Hank decided to try to get to the Post Office before closing time to see if we had received a reply to my card. And we had. It was not in the mail but it was in the Post Office. Hank ran smack into Ben Walcher. Ben had come back to Norman a few days before and had been there when my card arrived. He had been champing at the bit to be with us, and when he found out where we were he was off to find us. He caught the first train north to Kansas and thence out to Woodward, arriving that afternoon. In trying to pick up our trail, he had gone into the Post Office only a few minutes before and Hank had arrived at the opportune time to catch him.

Ben happened to have a little money. Bright and early the next morning, he paid our fines and we were free. We sold him what game we had, boxed it up and put it on the train

for Kansas City. The rest of the money we needed was a loan, though Ben little cared whether he got it back. We pulled out of town as soon as we could get our affairs in order, down the river and away from the scene of our crimes.

By evening we were eighteen or twenty miles away, in the general direction of Cantonment, but this time, we had kept to the north bank of the river. About sundown, we pulled into a good spot for camping and stopped for the night. On the north, we were sheltered by hills and timber, to the south and west, extending down into the river bottom, lay an extensive thicket of vines, small brush and tall grass. Ben and Hank decided right off that there should be deer in that thicket. So while Pa and I set up the tent, made the fire and proceeded with the preparation of the camp and supper, they unhitched the team, took their guns and rode out into the bottom. Ben circling down toward the river, Hank staying beneath the bluff at the bottom's edge.

They had not gone more than a couple hundred yards when Ben jumped two deer. They plunged into the brush so quickly that he could not shoot, but he yelled as loudly as he could, "Look out, Hank, they're coming." And come they did. In about a minute Hank's gun opened up. The deer had dashed straight through the thicket and out on the other side within range of his gun. He had a muzzle-loading, double-barrelled shot gun, well loaded with buckshot, and he put a charge into each deer as soon as it came into the open. One went down and stayed. The other fell but jumped up and ran into the brush, obviously badly wounded. His two shots expended, Hank could only watch it go.

In a few minutes, the boys were back in camp. Pa took one of the dogs and went back with them to where the deer had disappeared. The dog picked up the trail easily enough and in fifteen or twenty minutes more, they came up to the dying deer. By the time darkness was full upon us, they were all back in camp with both deer. I had supper ready and everyone was hungry. As we ate, we talked much of the good luck of the day and, inwardly, drank deeply of the hunter's joy.

But we were much too close to the scenes of our recent trouble. We had no intention of really hunting in this area, the evening's exploits were strictly incidental. And they made it even more important that we get moving as soon as possible. So mostly in the hills and timber out of the valley on the north side. When we were again down about to Cantonment, but several miles north and across the river, we came into a sizable section of timbered country which looked like good hunting. We decided once more to pull up for a few days and hunt it out.

The trip which had started so poorly and had progressed into infamy now was to wind up in a blaze of glory. I do not recall all the details, but all the party now got into the deer killing act. We found game for the first time in

abundance. When we started home a few days later, by way of Contonment and El Reno, we had eight deer in the wagon besides good quantities of birds. I do remember one incident of the hunt, however, in which I more or less duplicated Hank's feat of doubling on a pair of deer. But I would never have made it had I been armed with Hank's muzzel-loader.

Ben and I were hunting on horseback that day. Since we had only the two horses of the team, we had to take turns, I had a gun which was then a very new and advanced design, a six-shot, lever action 12 guage. We were riding through grass and brush stirrup high, and were of course, separated a hundred yards or more. Two beautiful bucks sprang up from the grass out to my right. One ran to my front and as I lined up on him, I could see from the corner of my eye that the other was running in exactly the opposite direction. But I could shoot at only one at a time, so I concentrated on the easier shot to my front. But my first round did not stop the deer, though I felt I must have hit him, I fired again. This time he stumbled and went down, but by the time I was reloaded he was on his feet and gone again. Disgustedly, I pumped out another round and this time, he went down to stay.

I did not then know that he would stay, but I did know that he was hard hit. So I decided to make a desperation try for the other one. Knowing that I could never shoot from the right side, since he would be far to the rear somewhere by now, I whirled to the left in the saddle and picked him up directly behing the horse and running straight away. He was too far, but I let go a shot on general principles. Rather to my surprise, he tumbled. I now had two deer down, but at points at least a hundred and twenty-five yards apart. I could not see after both, so I yelled to Ben to go to the one in the rear. I ran to the first one and found him down but still not dead. I had to spend a few moments with the xxxxxx business of getting him killed and his throat cut. But when Ben arrived at the other, he found him perfectly still.

When we dressed that deer, we found not one shot in his body. But one, and only one that we ever found, had entered the back of his head and he had died instantly. We stepped off the distance. The shot had traveled eighty-four yards.

When we got to Oklahoma City, we started a canvass to dispose of some of our meat. After some dickering, we made a deal with a butcher to take all the hind quarters of the deer. We drove into the yard behind his shop, skinned out all the meat and delivered his portion. This netted enough to defray all the expenses of the expedition, and we had several hundred pounds of meat left to serve on the tables of the hotel. We drove into Norman a day or two before Christmas.

So ended our last hunting trip into the Cherokee Outlet. It had been a great experience, and in the end, a good hunt. But our chief excuse for the trip, land, had still escaped us. Moreover, we had discovered that the law had

come to the territory; the hunter's paradise was gone.

Chapter XXV

The Great Lottery

When Jefferson Lehmanowsky Hefley set his face westward from central Illinois to seek for himself and family, an earthly dwelling place which they could call their own, and which would be for them a home while they tarried in this world, he was a young man little past thirty. He knew not how long was to be the trek, nor how many camping places would mark the trail along the frontiers of the middle west where his camp fires were to turn brightly while he sojourned briefly here and there. Much less, did he know the experiences, happy and sad, easy and hard, cheering and discouraging, which would tread their little wondering paths through his ever growing personality while his dark hair and sandy beard were slowly changing to the spotless white of the winter new-sifted snow. One thing he had learned, and since his face had never turned back, could well remember--the western sunshine still held it's beauty for him and it's attraction had not lost it's power.

He was fifty years old when Oklahoma began to be opened to settlement by white men. He stopped in the town of Norman for a time, a long time, where he maintained a kind of permanent camp for fourteen years. During this period, he and his wife had a chance to note somewhat, the sort of contribution they had made to the world. Their family had about grown up, had received what intellectual and social culture it's age could give it. The picture was not bad.

Having digressed for several chapters to discourse upon certain highlights of our early years in Oklahoma, it is now necessary to return mementarily to the even tenure of those events in Norman. It will be recalled that my father's farm south of the Norman townsite had been taken from him by ruling of the land office and the family had moved to a acreage west of the University. Here Hank contin ued with his brick yard and Pa with his hobby of raising fruit, while, together, they did considerable farming. I hardly know which of these industries could be said to represent their chief occupation, but all together, they produced a reasonably adequate income.

John and I, and the two younger girls continued in school though we had other interests for both income and pleasure. John dropped out for two or three years at one time or another to teach school, making one excursion all the way to Arizona for that purpose. I had now definitely committed myself to the ministry and was engaged most of the time in some kind of church work, as a student worker and then a student minister before being ordained. Meanwhile, I had left the University for a year's training at the seminary in Fort Worth, returning to get my degree at Norman in 1899. I have always been sorry I cannot say I was a member of Oklahoma's first graduating class as well as being a participant in it's first classroom session. That first graduation had taken place

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the year before. It consisted, however, of just two persons, Ross Hume and Roy Stupes. In my class there were three.

These years were never without their trials. The country was still ray and there were many mouths to feed. The business of maintaining an existence was seldom without it's pressures. But we were a family who liked to take the existence and let the pressure go. We never let trouble worry us for long.

There was the time when typhoid fever seemed about to take it's toll. There was much of it going through the coun - try that year. We were still living on the farm, probably, our well became infected or something, though then no one knew much about where such things came from.

All three of the girls still at home, came down with it at the same time. Orana and Charlie were living in Muskogee. It seemed that surely one or more of the victims would never pull through. Ben W alcher drove the team and wagon to Muskogee to bring Orana home. But with good care, they all made it back to health. They all lost their hair. They presented a pretty horrible sight during the months it took to get a new growth.

Raising livestock sometimes was even more trying and complicated than raising children. For instance, during the ~~fixx~~ first several years there was often a question whether the chicken crop would be harvested in greater part by the farmer, the coyote, the 'possum ot the hawk. It seemed someone had to be in attendance just about all the time or the chickens would disappear.

But we compensated in part for our losses by the sport we derived in battling the mauraders. Hank , as was no infrequently his custom, came up with the prize exploit of this campaign. One night he heard a chicken squall. Grabbing his shot gun, always handy for just such an occasion, he dashed out to route the enemy, This he succeeded in doing, but said enemy held on to it's prize as it loped away. With nothing but the sound of the squalling hen to guide him in the pitch black night, Hank raised the gun and fired. That enemy prompt ly succumbed. Running after his shot, Hank came upon a dead coyote. Fire control by radar had been born.

But, enen in those slow days, time marched on. By the beginning of 1901, the start of a new century, all the family had reached maturity. Orana and Nora were long since gone, Belle and I both were married the year before, and I was living in Purcell. Co-incidentally, I was a preacher, and Belle had married one. Nellie and Hank were making plans for marriages in the near future. John was largely on his own, either in school or away teaching. Henry, of course, would never marry or leave home due to his physical handicaps. Al together, it was a rugged family of good character, good abil-

ity, good prospects. It's progenitors need not be ashamed nor make apology. Our parents contribution to society, their children, had about been made, for better or for worse. Their goal now must be principally their own happiness and self sufficiency through the twilight years.

But happiness for them did not lie in idleness or inertia. They were now both past sixty, but a life of hardship and hard work had not been unkind to them. Their bearing and energy were manifestations of the hope, vision and faith which still lay in their hearts. Some voice of destiny seemed still to say to them, "Well done." But the end is not here. You have not yet reached your goal. It lies a bit farther west."

Having heard the voice, how did they react? Though age may have bent them a little, were they disgruntled, meloncholy, frightened? Not at all. The voice which they heard was once again the "Lure of the Poineer." It had been heard before. It was a friendly voice. It was enough to quicken a step, to brighten an eye.

While their family had been decreasing, the Territory of Oklahoma was still growing. Following the opening of the Cherokee Outlet, there were to be three more acquisitions of territory, besides numerous transfers of Indians lands already within the Territory. The first of these was of minor importance. The Kickapoo Indians, who had refused to sell their lands in 1891 when the I owa, Sac and Fox, and Shawnee-Pottawatomie reservations had been settled, were finally prevailed upon to allot their lands in severalty and to turn over the surplus to the government. This opening took place in 1895 but created little excitement and noe of us at Norman were interested.

Next was Greer County in 1897, This was a great area lying out to the southwest, long in dispute between Texas and Oklahoma due to an inability to agree as to what constituted the main stream of the Red River. Like the Panhandle, this country was already largely settled, or at least claimed by some sort of title, so no run for homesteads resulted when the controversy over it's political affiliation was finally settled.

But the last was to be one of the most important and exciting of all. The Kiowas, Comanche, Wichita and Caddo tribes occupied vaste territories in the southwest. An agreement was reached with the last of these tribes in 1900, so that their country would be settled and in July of 1901, the great moment arrived.

Actually, in terms of the number of persons permitted to take claims, it was a disappointment. The Indian allotments, school reservations and certain other lands withheld for public purposes, military and forest reservations, and nearly half a million acres set aside as grazing lands for the

Indian's stock; all these took big bites out of the total area. When all was sifted down, there remained only about thirteen thousand homesteads.

Those of us who had been present at the original opening in 1889 had learned in a few minutes that the mehtod used for distributing homes was about as poor a one as could have been devised. But those responsible for policy in the Land Department did not learn it. It was not until the debacle of the Cherokee-Strip that they began to realize there might be a more equitable way. So this time, instead of the minor changes in regulations and half-hearted attempts at improved policing, there was developed a radically different system of distribution. This time successful claimants would be determined by lot rather than by the stamina of their horses, the speed of their draw, or the skill with which they eluded detection while beating the deadline.

Persons eligible to take a homestead were required to register. The country was divided into two districts, roughly north and south, of sixty-five hundred claims each. A registrant was required to stipulate his choice of districts and his name was placed in that box for the drawing. Registration boothes were established at El Reno and Lawton. El Reno was not in the area, but was conveniently located to the nor thern district. Lawton was not even a town yet, but would become so with the opening. A townsite had been laid out near Ft. Sill, named for a famous general, and designated a county seat. That is not to say it did not have plenty of citizens already. Government surveyors, Land Office personnel sent for the registrations, gamblers and hangers on of all sorts, as well as crow ds of registrants, created a tent and prairie schooner city of upwards of ten thousand weeks before any settlement could officially take place.

Registration was to start on July 10. From my home in Purcell, I followed avidly the newspaper accounts of events and my old love of the land came flooding back despite my dedication to the church. Rather on the spur of the moment, I jumped on the train and went to El Reno to register. I did not know what I would do with a farm if I got it, but that was a bridge I would cross when I came to it.

On the way home, I stopped in Norman to see the folks and to ascertain what interest they might have in the proceedings. I had not previously discussed the matter with them at any length. My father was just as interested as ever in pioneering a new country, but he had not been sure this was the time and place. However, it took little imagination to realize that the place, as far as Oklahoma was concerned, would soon be gone. And that the time, for them, could not be far off. So, rather upon my persuasion, he, too, went to El Reno and put his name in the pot.

There were only thirteen thousand homesteads, but it is

said that sixteen thousand persons registered at El Reno in a single day. At the close of the registration on the twenty-sixth, the land office had more than a hundred and sixty-four thousand names on file. This new w as a game of chance with the odds ab out as usual against the uninitiated.

And my luck held. Registrants were not required to be present for the drawing but huge crowds did gather each day. We stayed at home and received our notification by mail. My card said I had drawn a blank. Not so with Pa. This time luck paid off where before honest attempts to comply with the regulations had failed. His number was within the lucky sixty five hundred.

That did not yet mean that he had a suitable claim. He still had his reservations as to the desirability of the western portion of the territory. He had been burned out in Kansas and was not anxious for it to happen again.

But he was not one to look too carefully into the mouth of a gift horse. So he promptly made his way to Lawton, he had chosen the south district, to see what he could see. Marlow, nearly thirty miles away, was the nearest rail point but there was now plenty of traffic between the two settlements. Getting a ride over was no problem. There were to be several days for each successful registrant to decide what property he desired. My father wanted to use this time to the best possible advantage by seeing as much of the area as p possible.

So he hired a wagon and team and a guide, a man who had worked on the government survey and knew the district well. They spent two or three days driving over the country. In the first place he decided, rightly or wrongly, that he would stay south of the mountains, that there winter's storms and summer's drouths would probably be less severe. The next consideration was to get on a livin g stream, again out of respect for the dry seasons he felt would come. And next in importance was the presence of timber. He was as great a lover of the prairie as I but his experience in Summer County had pointed up the myriad of virtues one discovers in wood when he had none of it.

And at last he came upon these things. It was about twenty miles south and four west of Lawton. This was eight or ten miles south of the mountains. Post Oak Creek, flowing the year around through a wide belt of post oak timber, dropped down from the hills and traversed the southwest portion of the quarter section. It was entirely new country so far as white people were concerned. A few Indians were in evidence through the area, a trading post was located eight miles north, and there was a sub-agency at Cache, alos, about eight miles away. This was untamed country all right, and it's challenge was a thing my father's nature could not overlook or pass by.

This was what he wanted, but he selected another claim as an alternate in case this one should go to a lower number before he had a chance to file. They got back to the land office as quickly as possible, but found it would be some time yet before his number came up. His claim, however, had not been taken and with the help of his guide, he kept a close watch on the postings as new filings were recorded. It was a day or two later when, at long last, his number was reached and he was called in to indicate his choice. Post Oak Farm was now his. The hundred and sixty acres which he had seen from so long ago. Could it be that the goal had been reached at last.

Chapter XXVI

The Last Camp

During the fall and winter following, my father set about getting his affairs in shape for another move. Together with Hank and John, when they could spare the time, he made several trips to the new farm for longer or shorter periods. It started before the summer was over when he and John went out with a load of fruit. Ever conscious of an opportunity to pick up an honest dime, he saw in the drowds which had flocked into Lawton, a ready mardet for any such produce which could be brought to them. On another occasion, later in the fall, Hank joined him out there on his way back from an antelope hunt to the "Big Pasture," an expedition sponsored by the University to obtain specimens for it's natural history instruction and museum.

So, with one or the other, and wometimes both, of the boys, he picked out a building site and cleared it of underbrush. Then with axes, saws and mauls, went into the timber to find and manufacture his building materials.

First requisite, as always, was a house to live in, at least adequate as a temporary home for what family was left together. They were their own architects and mechanics and were alone to do as they pleased. Most of the winter was spent thus, in clearing, cutting, splitting, and building, but by spring they could report fair progress. The house was ready, a two room log cabin, sixteen by twenty-four. It was time for the move.

Most of the farm was covered with a good stand of timber, principally post oak, a worthy member of the white oak group, straight grained, durable and tough. For the house they selected the better trees, cut logs into lengths of about eight feet and dragged them to the site with the mules. With mauls and wedges, the logs were split down the middle. The flat faces of the half logs were smoothed and straightened some by hewing. They were then raised to a vertical position, in the manner of a stockade, on top of a continuous stone foundation. The top ends were pulled into line and a sawed plate spiked down on top. When properly aligned, the whole was rigidly braced against crawling by diagonals placed atop the ceiling joists. Concession was made to the march of progress in the world outside, in that materials for ceilings, floors, doors and windows came from the lumber yard. On the exterior, the vertical cracks were filled with billets of wood and thoroughly caulked with mud.

This kind of structure made a very presentable cabin when put together carefully, and was warm, dry and durable. This particular one stood for some fifteen years or more with very small expense or labor for it's maintenance. Later, my father built stables, sheds, corrals of the same sort of construction.

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The Last Camp

During the fall and winter following, my father met about getting his affairs in shape for another move. Together with Hank and John, when they could spare the time, he made several trips to the new farm for longer or shorter periods. It started before the summer was over when he and John went out with a load of fruit. Ever conscious of an opportunity to pick up an honest dime, he saw in the crowds which had flocked into Lawton, a ready market for any such produce which could be brought to them. On another occasion, later in the fall, Hank joined him out there on his way back from an Eclope hunt to the "Big Pasture," an expedition sponsored by the University to obtain specimens for it's natural history exhibition and museum.

So, with one or the other, and sometimes both, of the boys, he picked out a building site and cleared it of underbrush. Then with axes, saws and mauls, went into the timber to find and manufacture his building materials.

First requisite, as always, was a house to live in, at least adequate as a temporary home for what family was left together. They were their own architects and mechanics and were alone to do as they pleased. Most of the winter was spent thus, in clearing, cutting, splitting, and building, but by spring they could report fair progress. The house was ready, a two room log cabin, sixteen by twenty-four. It was time for the move.

Most of the farm was covered with a good stand of timber, principally post oak, a worthy member of the white oak group, straight grained, durable and tough. For the house they selected the better trees, cut logs into lengths of about eight feet and dragged them to the site with the mules. With mauls and wedges, the logs were split down the middle. The flat faces of the half logs were smoothed and straightened some by hewing. They were then rested to a vertical position, in the manner of a stockade, on top of a continuous stone foundation. The top ends were pulled into line and a sawed plate spiked down on top. When properly aligned, the whole was rigidly braced against cramping by diagonally placed stop the cutting joists. Concession was made to the march of progress in the world outside, in that materials for ceilings, floors, doors and windows came from the lumber yard. On the exterior, the vertical cracks were filled with billets of wood and thoroughly caulked with mud.

This kind of structure made a very presentable cabin when put together carefully, and was warm, dry and durable. This particular one stood for some fifteen years or more with very small expense or labor for it's maintenance. Later, my father built stables, sheds, corrals of the same sort of construction.

Early in the spring, he was ready. At this time, he owned a very good team of mules and a good wagon. He fitted out the wagon as the prairie schooners of old and loaded what household essentials could be carried. Some few things had been taken and left on previous trips. Only the most modest furnishings were contemplated, the residue of fourteen years was left in the big house where Hank would continue to live and soon would bring his bride.

He built a special little coop to hang on the back of the wagon so they could have a start of chickens. And he selected a good milk cow, one well broken to lead, which could be tied to the back of the wagon.

Then one bright morning in April 1902, he hitched up the mules and climber aboard; he and his wife, Clememtine, a lifetime's companion in adventure and wandering, and two sons, John and Henry. They said goodbye to their friends and neighbors and to the old camping ground and were off to a new home, a new frontier, a new beginning.

As roads existed then, it must have been about a hundred and twenty-five miles to Post Oak. With their slow moving outfit and reasonable luck, this was a four day trip. But no one cared how far or how long. Dreams are the sources of inspiration, dirt, fatigue and the myriad trials of the trail were without consequence. In this case, the trials were many and the four days stretched into ten. These immigrants, as had many before them, ran into bad weather. Spring rains and storms hit them the second day out. There were many creeks to be vrossed and there were no bridges. Roads were poor everywhere, high water greeted them in every valley.

But, as I had learned so many years before, my father was never one to disregard possibilities. His preparations for a trip were maddening to most persons who were to accompany him, but generally, they praised his wisdom before they got home. This time he had been thorough as always, and the camp outfit was adequate and comfortable. They came to journey's end in due course, intact and thankful.

Up to this time, I had not yet seen the new place. As soon as I could, a few months after the folks had moved in, I did go out to see what the new picture presented. I confess that I was more than pleased. Likes and dislikes are peculiarities of the individual, but what I saw here was what I had always liked best, a bit of the natural world as God made it. Man's accomplishments, I know, in creating both beauty and value, have been enormous. Still on many occasions I have been made to feel very sad, indeed, upon noting the effectiveness with which man, in his on-rushing march of civil ization, had desecrated the beauties of nature.

Here I looked upon an almost unbroken woodland placed

upon an undulating terrane spread out before me in all directions. But man's improvements had been well done also; a newly built cottate in the edge of a natural park of some twenty acres, fine oaks all about, each a thing of beauty in itself, and a complement to the whold. To me it all had a wonderful appeal. I had to look it over, walk it over, think it over, and just enjoy it a good while before I could consider, rationally, the prospects, the possibilities, the problems it represented for my father and mother. Certainly, all would not be roses for them in the new adventure.

But both were happy and completely rejuvenated. It was as though thirty years, and as many disappointments, had never been. They recognized, fully, the great task before them and the immediate need for so many, many things they did not have. Prime among these, were facilities for the stock, a shelter for the cow, stables for the mules, and a place to keep the chickens. Likewise, a feed house for all. As had always been thw trouble on the frontier, a lack of money and the difficulty of getting materials caused these problems to loom large. The solution would have to come, largely from the farm itself. It's timber thus became an asset of tremendous importance. But that became true in other ways than in building.

These surroundings, the timber, the wild creatures of the forest, the log cabin, the very smell of this unspoiled land, took me back to that other home in Howard County so long ago when my father had built another log cabin in the woods. The wail of the Coyote, the song of cricket and locust, the mournful hoo hoo hoo, of the owl, all sweet music to me now, whereas, they had then been most disturbing. The hoot owls along the creek were particularly numerous and noisy. Each evening as the shadows came creeping in from tree trunk to tree trunk, they would begin their great concert, expressing their emotion in soulful hooting and strange chatterings, perhaps, designed to intimidate pale faced intruders into their age old domain. How far from intimidation were these particular intruders, to whom a nature short in any of it's elements could but be depressing.

But there was one new leement here, one none of us had experienced before. This was the heart of the Indian country. Far more startling to us than wolves or owls, were the periodic gathering of the tribemen. In case of marriage, sickness or death, they would come. All night long one could hear the weird chantings of joy or the wild wails of grief as they rose and fell to the steady rythmic beating of the tom-tom.

Yes, it was a good place, this new stop on that far flung ever changing, and ever westward moving line of the borderland between the civilized and the wild. The folks had been following that meandering trail for more than thirty years, pursuing a dream while abiding in many a stopping place along

the way. Here was a new stopping place, and they were as eager to try again as they had been so many years before when they started from Illinois.

And all the while, mu father was going over in his mind how best to proceed to develop his new farm with the limited resources at his command. He did not discuss his problems much or the business of working them out. First he knew he would have to have money, money which he did not then possess. He would have to find it some place.

In this connection, he noted that all the best farming land was covered with timber and would have to be cleared. This would be a long, hard job. But he, also, noted two other important factors, the timber was mostly of good quality post oak, ideal for fence posts and the miles of prairie farms all around him would require thousands of posts in their fencing. It looked like a market close at hand for all he could produce.

So the next order of business, after the necessary temporary shelters, was the hiring of a couple of men and the commencing of clearing operations, together with the reduction of all suitable timber into posts. This work went on through the summer. His plan was fine, waterproof, except for one small detail. The rest of the settlers were just about as hard up for cash as he. They were all building up their properties, to be sure, but the improvements moved slowly. Thus, the sale of posts moved slowly, also.

But as fall came on, improvement work all around the neighborhood slowed sown and the post selling project shrank to the vanishing point. There was no income in sight for the winter and no supplies on hand to carry them through as would ordinarily have been the case with a prudent established farmer. Pa told me later that he reached the decision that his only possibility for living through the winter seemed to be the cutting and hauling to Lawton of cord wood. This did not appeal to him at all. He knew it would be hard work and small pay, but he could see nothing better. So he cut poles and began the construction of a wood rack for the wagon with which to haul fire wood.

That very day, a man drove by looking for a place to purchase a load of wood. Pa said that gave him a new idea right away. They had been cutting trees for months and using the logs for building purposes and posts. Unused tree tops were still lying everywhere in the woods. They were just in his way and would have to be disposed of but he had not yet started to burn them. Immediately, he proposed to the visitor that he load up from the down tree tops.

That just suited everybody. His sale of firewood began that day and continued all winter. It was cheap for his neighbors, but for a time, it was much more profitable to him

than the sale of posts, and with little effort on his pa rt.

And when spring arrived again, nearly all his tree tops were out of the way. He always recalled this development as being quite a happy solution of what threatened for a time to be one of his most serious difficulties.

Through all the years, my father had retained in his mind a hobby, almost an obsession, for the growing of fruit. It had shown up somewhat in other places, but here, broke out in considerable violence. He always seemed to think his farm could never be as he wanted it until it became, in part at least, a fruti farm. He was dreaming of this now. The first ground to be prepared for planting was the orchard. Among the first purchases made was his stock form the nurser y.

For his orchard, he selected a five acre tract, lying just west of the home site and sloping gently westward toward the creek and the west edge of the farm. By this second spring, he had this area completely cleared of timber, plowed and ready to set with trees. He ordered all the more desirable varieties of two and three year old trees. Apples, peaches, plums and cherries, along with quantities of blackberries, dewberries, gooseberries, curfents and grapes. He got them all planted that spring and it was rather wonderful how quickly he had a fine looking and productive orchard.

But, as is so constantly being demonstrated in the complex civilization in which we live today, work b egets work. Everything we do seems to require that something else be done. So with the orchard. He immediately found that the young fruit trees could not grow unless something could be done to protect them from the rabbits. The country was swarming with them, in the timber and along the creek. And there is nothing quite so attractive to them as the bark of young fruit trees. The fight was soined at once.

He felt he could not afford the fencing which would have been required to keep the rabbits out. He adopted a plan which, to me and to everyone else who noted it, seemed a collossal undertaking. He decided to enclose the entire orchard with a rabbit tight railing fence and to get all the material for it right there on the ground.

I do not know how man y hours it took to build that fence but it must have represented a tremendous amount of work. He selected the straightest timber he could find, sawed it to lengths of about three feet, and with axe and wedges, split out the pailing about three-quarters of an inch thick. When they came out crooked, he hewed them straight, or threw the worst ones aside. They were then nailed closely together to striggers made from rails and spiked to posts. And he took great care to see that the cracks were close enough that a rabbit could not get through.

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remarkable how soon he had his orchard and vineyard wholly protected from rabbits. And that fence was good for ten years or more.

To complete the story of the orchare-trees and vines, all grew very well and came into bearing early. Fruit and berries were of excellent quality. For several years, my father marketed many crates of fine berries and good crops of the various fruits. He was highly pleased with this venture. But after six or seven years, trees and vines began to die. He replaced them as fast as they withered, trying all the while to find the source of the trouble with slight success. By ten or twelve years, the dying had increased to the extent that he had to give up. In a few more years, except for one or two varieties of plums and a few pears, the orchard was gone. It seemed that he had demonstrated that fruit growing in that particular locality was not very practicable.

The orchard represented only one of the many things with which he, and all tge other settlers, were experimenting through the years. The problems in the life of a frontiersman arises, largely, from the fact that he is a stranger in a strange land. Every branch of his industry means the trying of an experiment. He spends many years and expends endless energy in becoming acquainted with a given situation. This is always interesting, as is any game where one may win or lose. At the same time, he must be frequently adjusting himself to disappointment.

It was found that the seasons were very uncertain. Of course, my father knew when he came that it was a semi-arid country with a low an nual rainfall. But that was only a part of the story. The great variation and irregularity of weather conditions is a longer story and one much harder to learn and combat. In fact, it is never learned except approximately and never combatted with complete success.

The first two years on the farm were very good. The rainfall was adequate and well distributed through the growing season. Then without reason that anyone knew, and of course without warning, the great drouth came. It was bad all over, but seemed particularly so right in that neighborhood. Being without westher stations to keep him informed, Pa, for many years kept his own records. Perhaps they were not scientifically compiled, but he always knew about how much rain had fallen. He reported that for a period of thirteen months, there was never more than on-sixteenth of an inch of rainfall at any one time. This was a calamity severe enough to set everything back just about to acratch. There was, of course, no crop that year. Once again it had to b e posts and firewood to get them through the winter. The neighbors who lacked these reasources were even harder hit and some had to give up.

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For all I have said about the orchard, it by no means occupied the total of my father's time. He was clearing other land and planting farm crops. He was gradually accumulating cattle, hogs and horses, and the flock of poultry grew in size and variety each year. The folks never believed in putting all their eggs in one basket, and they did not even believe all the eggs should be of the same variety. They soon had ducks and geese, turkeys and guineas, as well as chickens. And when crops were poorly, something else generally was doing better. Perhaps the market for meat would be good; the calf or chicken crop would be ready. If it was eggs or milk which commanded a good price, they had those things too. When corn failed in the field, the acorn crop likely would be good in the woods. The hogs fattened out just about as well. The winter's meat supply was dependent on the acorn s more than once. Thus the ledger at the end of the year, was never far out of balance. They were content.

As the years went by, the farm became a more and more attractive place, and the family and relatives from over the state came to look upon a trip to Post Oak Farm as a rare treat. To spend a few days or a week in the woods and along the creek was a delight to us all, and especially to the grand children, who were becoming more and more numerous. And the nicest thing about it was that everyone was always welcome and always got plenty to eat. Ma never failed to be a good hand to feed folks.

So the time rolled on for about seven years. There was a slow but steady gain in resources and the improvements about the place. The livestock population reached the point where my father found it desirable to lease and fence a quarter section of Indian land which adjoined him on the east, thereby, greatly increasing his pasture. But they were still living in the log house, though it had been enlarged a little. We children of the family all thought the time had come for something better.

I took the matter up with the folks and we arrived at a plan of action. As a young man, I had worked a good deal with construction and picked up pointers from mechanics in many lines. After going into the ministry, I found there was almost a endless amount of work for someone in building, enlarging or finishing the various churches in my charge, or in making liveable, the parsonages my family was expected to occupy. Probably, I was wrong in letting my people know I could tell the difference between a hammer and a mason's trowel, but it generally looked like I would have to do the work if it got done. So by this time, I fancied myself to be a pretty fair all around carpenter, as well as a jack of any trade which the occasion might demand.

I proposed to Pa that I take a year's leave from my work, move down to the farm and help him with the building of a house. He took favorably to the idaa and we got busy.

We atreed on a plan for the house, I got up a meager sort of drawing by which to work, made out a bill of materials and got off an order for them to Chicago. There was still not much of a source of supply closer than Lawton and still heavy demands there. We thought we would save money by ordering direct. By the time my year's leave was to start, with the annual c huch conference in October, we had a carload of lumber on the way.

At conference I asked for and received my leave and moved immediately to the farm. We hired one good carpenter, by the name of Rhodes. We got started right away so that by winter, we could have it enclosed and could work inside. By spring it was ready to be occupied.

When finished it was really quite a house. I was no architect and perhaps, it was not built in complete accord with any traditional tenets. Perhaps it was a sort of Dutch Colonial, though at the time, I could not have said even that much. It was two stories with four large rooms below and five smaller ones above. Probably the size of it was a mistake, though it was really built with the possibility in mind that someone of the children, complete with family, would sooner or later move in to help the old folks run the farm. I considered this strongly for myself, but it never worked out. To this day, I have not lost my love of the soil but I had other loves too, and other responsibilities. As it turned out, the life of a farmer was not for me.

Of course, there was no plumbing in the house. Such a thing was entirely beyond the imagination of anyone in that frontier day. No, not entirely. We did imagine it for sometime in the future and built a room which it was hoped would sometime be a bath.

When we got it all painted and finished inside and out, it stood out as a land mark for the entire countryside. At the time, there was nothing to equal it for many miles around. And the outlay of cash was quite reasonable since we had done most of the work ourselves. The folks now had an adequate and comfortable home in which to spend the rest of their lives. And all those extra rooms were not altogether wasted. With so much family all living in the state, they were occupied a goodly portion of the time, as we took turns visiting the folks on the farm.

The log house still stood, and served. Hired help lived in it off and on for a while. Then it became a grainery and place of repose for the accumulated trivia which thrifty families seldom use but never throw away.

Chapter XXVII

Life Settles Down

The building of the house was not the end of development at Post Oak though it might be said to have been the climax. I spent only the one year on the farm, but my father and the farm, kept right on moving forward.

That same year, the house was finished, a rural telephone line came into the neighborhood and the folks were charter subscribers. No one who has not lived in the country without it, can realize what a blessing this was to frontier farmers, and particularly to their wives.

Three or four years later, he bought and installed a carbide gas lighting system. This, too, was a great blessing while it worked. But it always seemed to make trouble and was expensive to operate. So after a few years, he gave up trying to keep it in shape. But by this time, coal oil lamps of the generating type were coming into use, and they did about as good a job with much less trouble.

For nearly ten years water was the most serious problem on the farm. There was no ground water in the country, he discovered to his sorrow. When they first went down there, he tried drilling a well out south of the log cabin. They must have gone down seventy-five feet or so, but got nothing and gave it up. Years later, prospectors for oil on an adjacent farm, did get artesian water in good quantity at a great depth, but it was not fit to drink. For years it flowed down across his pasture into the creek.

So it was necessary for most of the farmers to get water from the creek, or from rain barrels when rain filled them. Pa sank barrels part way into the sandbar so that water could filter through into clear pools from which it could be dipped. Several neighbors dipped from these barrels, and it was always rather amazing that two barrels half filled with water could fill a half dozen barrels brought down on sleds. The sand seemed always amply supplied.

But in that many years that hauling of water got awfully old. So after the house was finished and finances somewhat adjusted, my father decided something had to be done about a water system. He got a man to help him and they went down to the creek and dug a well. This was a quarter of a mile from the house, but there seemed no other way to do it. He found a level spot on the bank ten or twelve feet above the bed of the creek. When they got to the level of the bed, they found water filled sand all right just as had been the case with the barrels sunk into the bed of the creek. They went down into the sand five or six feet and walled up the sides to keep the sand from caving. They now had an abundant and unfailing supply of water.

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He bought a windmill and pump, laid a pipe line to the house, erected a large storage tank in the yard, and put plumbing in the kitchen and milk room. Belle's brother-in-law from Norman, a good friend of all the family, came down to do the plumbing. This all entailed a lot of work and considerable expense, but it was the most satisfying convenience and improvement of the entire enterprise. There was sufficient water now to provide considerable irrigation for the yard and garden. Gradually the wilderness was being made to blossom.

We had built a fine, small fireplace in the living room of the new house. This had not been done in the cabin, and my father missed it terribly. Orana's husband, Charlie Kahoe, came down to do the masonry work. Pa greatly enjoyed sitting before the open fire. He was still a lover of the out-of-doors and he said the fireplace was almost half as good a being out in the timber before an open camp fire.

As the house became a landmark in the community upon it's erection, so the entire farm as it developed and prospered, came to be known by all. One of it's best known features was the bell. I do not remember just when it was erected, but it was still there when the old folks left. Pa got hold of it some place by accident, I guess, and was struck with the notion it could be used to call him in from the fields. So he set up a frame in the vackyard and hung the bell there for Ma to ring. It's tolling, however, could be heard far beyond the confines of that farm, and all the neighbors began to listen and respond to it, letting their day's activities to controlled thereby. So the bell became no only a convenience for the folks but a responsibility to the entire neighborhood. One, however, which Ma proudly and responded to faithfully. So for many years, the bell rand out morning, noon and night with almost the regularity of the rising and setting of the sun.

The occupants of Post Oak were even more widely known than the farm itself. A goodly portion of their contemporaries, having been there themselves, were well aware of the colossal n ature of their undertaking in coming to a perfectly wild land to hew out a productive farm and a modern country home. The fact that this task was entered into when they were both of an age when most people want to taper off toward retirement, brought them a respect which was constantly augmented by their friendliness, fair dealing, resourcefulness and independence.

But the folks never recognized that their efforts were unusual or particularly commendable. After all, there were many things in their favor. They were free people following the course of their own desires, they had been tested before and knew the nature of their own courage. They were people of optimism and faith. They faced up to their task and were unafraid. Add to all this the fact that they were strong and healthy. What more could any couple need.

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This last, of course, was a great asset. Few couples their age could have gone on through the years without serious curtailment of activity by reason of illness. In this, they were fortunate, but I n ever felt it was completely a matter of luck. They lived the life that makes men rugged and they held to the tenets which make for peace of mind.

Pa, in particular, became known as quite a character about the country. This was due to several things, all tied in with the fact that he got out more than my mother, and was seen, talked with, and discussed by more people.

First was his striking appearance. In all his later life, he wore a fairly full beard and by this time, it was snowy white. It made him look quite patriarchal and he was never so old as many people judged him to be, nor nearly as feeble as that judgment would lead people to think he must be. Thus, many common-place occurences to which he never gave a thought, struck others as being most unusual.

Then there were the teams he drove. He never would claim any intent in the matter, but he seemed always to pick up the most highly spirited horses in the entire country. I think he must have admired in them the untamed spirit which so epitomized his own character. It was common gossip that he would some day get himself killed by one of those wild teams. Even at the time he left the farm, he still owned and drove a pair of light mares which had grown old with him but lost little of their fire. In their late 'teens, they still had to have their run of a mile or two on a winter's morning before he could make much headway toward controlling them. His wagon, buggy or surrey had to be pretty ruggedly constructed. He generally was able to hold any team reasonably close to the road or turn it into an open field and just let it run un til it was ready to settle down into the day's work.

He seldom rode any more himself, but there was a passel of grandchildren by this time who wanted to do so every time they came to the farm. This caused daughters and daughters-in-law- much anguish and many long arguments. They never felt there was a horse on the place safe for a child to be on.

As if this were not bad enough in itself, this period covered the early years in the development and distribution of automobiles as well as great expansion of railroad systems. To animals reaching maturity on farms or ranches far removed from such monsters, they were most terrible to behold. Many horses could never shake off their fear of them. Or perhaps it just developed into a game. At any rate, every animal he ever had on the place seemed thus afflicted, even the gentle mules he had taken down from Norman.

Oh just one occasion did the prediction of disaster come near to fulfillment. He had driven into Cache, I think for a load of lumber, at any rate, he had removed the wagon bed

bed and was driving from the rear frame., a common practice. He had arrived in town but had not yet loaded and happened to be near the tracks when a train came in. The whistle blew and the team went wild. Both animals reared madly and turned sharply before taking off. Their movements were so irregular and violent that the wagon's coupling pole was broken, thus, leaving Pa's seat behind. I suppose it did not occur to him to turn them loose and look after himself, so he was thrown violently to the ground. In the melee he became tangled in the reins and was dragged a considerable distance. It all took place so fast even he could never be sure just what happened or why. The team ran on a few hundred yards and stopped without injury, but Pa was very nearly done in. Someone gathered him up and got him to a doctor who bandaged him up and got someone to take him home. He was not unconscious but was covered with wounds and bruises. His head and face were a ness of cuts and his hands and arms had hardly any skin left. He was in bed a couple of weeks and it was months before he was himself again.

The Old Man with the Scythe was close upon him on at least one other occasion. This time it was in a feed lot at home where he was caring for some cattle. Most of the cattle he always kept were milk cows and at this time, he had a three year old Jersy bull. He had bought the animal as a calf and it had grown up there on the place without excuse for wildness. But for a year, it had shown a tendency toward churlishness and friends and family were all afraid of him. Pa had been warned to be careful, but he gave the matter little thought. In fact, he never showed fear of any animal he ever worked with. In this, I suspect he was often a little foolish and careless of his won safety.

In the lot on this day, the bull was more than ordinarily surly; he kept pawing the ground and snorting and refused to stay still or keep his place in the line. Pa scolded him in a friendly enemy way and went on with his work. Suddenly and unexpectedly, with rumblings low in his chest, the bull started for the man. Pa refused to be intimidated. He yelled at the bull and stook his ground, but his antagonist nerely came on with increased momentum. Pa still held the pitchfork he had been using, and he countered the charge with that, but it did not stop the bull nor turn it aside. So they met head on. The man being the lighter by a good many multiples was bound to go down. The bull passed over. From there, the scuffle was fast and furious. No one saw it, Pa himself could only grasp a small part. But he quickly decided it was time to accept a loser's role, and to leave the field to the enemy. Partly by intent and partly by instinct, he rolled and dodged and crawled the few yards to the lot fence. When he finally suceeded in rolling under it, the bull gave up the chase.

Pa laughed it off later, said he never did believe in bull fights anyway. But he could hardly pretend he was not hurt. As a matter of fact, he was just one big hurt from

head to foot. There were no broken bones or severe cuts, but there were many small wounds and bruised. He was sereral weeks in getting over them.

Well, all such things seemed to come as a natural part of life on a new farm in a new country. But the folks never let them be a discouragement. My father often said that, in spite of everything that came along to distress them, he had never been so content in all his life. It seemed to him that here he had more nearly reached the fulfillment of his lifetime goal than ever before.

So life and time went on through seventeen years. Contented and happy, always planning something new, accumulating a little each year, gradually getting together the things they needed and wanted, the folks found life was good.

In 1915 they celebrated happily their golden wedding, and soon afterward, decided to celebrate further by making a trip back to the old neighborhood in Illinois. This proved to be one of the most momentuous events of their lives, not because of the trip itself but because it proved something to them they had never quite known before. They found they were now homesick for Post Oak, not for Illinois. They knew now they belonged to the west, that their years of struggle had not been in vain.

They had not been back there since they left in 1871, had never seen most of their friends and relatives who had stayed behind. We were all glad for them to go but felt they might need help somewhere along the way. One of Nora's daughters was about grown by this time, and she went along to keep an eye on them for us. They got on the train and pulled out, I guess, for the first and last long train trip of their lives.

They had a fine trip, many pleasant visits and much circulating about among the relatives. But in a few weeks, they were more than ready to get back to Oklahoma and Post Oak Farm.

Chapter XXVII

The End Of The Trail

I have sketched briefly the story of the settlement and development of this last farm in commanche County. The story encompasses half a generation of time while the country was changing from an unbroken wilderness, roamed over by equally untamed Plains Indians to a a stable and prosperous farm community in which my parents held an honored place. They had cut a home out of the frontier and helped to lead it into a high place in the civilization which no one's love of the wild could hold back.

But time and change move steadily onward. The folks were really getting old now, the end of their pilgrimage approached ever nearer. It was, in fact, nearer than any of us had reason to suspect.

In the Spring of 1920, mother began to show signs of failing health. Of course doctors were consulted at once, and all anyone knew to do was done, but she continued downward and by the middle of the summer, was hardly able to be about. Doctors began to fear a malignant development, but they seemed unable to do anything about it. The trouble was on the inside and, while doctors now know more about such things than those of that time, I suspect the situation would have been hopeless in any event.

In another month or two, the symptoms were most definite. Surely, both the liver and stomach were seriously involved, and the doctors were very positive that any successful treatment was impossible.

We did not try to keep her in ignorance of her condition, but she took it patiently and philosophically. Most of the time she was not entirely confined to her bed, and she seemed not to suffer greatly either physically or mentally. But she slowly grew worse all summer and fall. Her faith did not fail her, nor did her mental capacities. She seemed content, and to believe in the righteousness of things, both here and in the hereafter. She often said that she was satisfied that all was well.

She lingered on until the twelfth of December, when she quietly and peacefully passed away.

The older part of my family was by this time, in the University, but my wife, Sylvia, took the younger children and went down to say with Pa until he could adjust to his new condition. There was another complication too. For some years, Henry's condition had been gradually deteriorating and this, together with the shock of his mother's passing, was too much for him. In only a few weeks he, too, passed on.

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Pa, or Grandpa, as we had come to call him mostly all the time, was now certainly at loose ends. The passing of my mother marked, definitely, an epoch in this family's history. They had lived together fifty-five years, and I am not misstating the case to say they had really shared the joys and sorrows of life. They really shared because they had always worked together and all their ibterests had been mutual.

Grandpa was now eighty-two, not really broken but surely a good deal weakened, and naturally, very uncertain as to his future course. He wanted to stay on the farm, he told me it was his home, and no other place could ever be. But it was obvious he could not handle the farm alone and equally so, that he had no business living there alone, if he could.

He recognized these things as well as the rest of us. While he was greatly attached to the place, he saw that the time had come for him to retire from it's active operation. The personal affairs of all us children had inadvertently led us farther from, rather than back to, the possibility of taking over, so there seemed no alternative but to acquire a tenant. This he proceeded to do as quickly as possible, so that the year's crops could be planted. In the haste which seemed necessary, he obtained a rather unsatisfactory renter who had to be put off the next winter.

The only plan for the moment was to drift about among the children, visiting and resting. Of course, he was welcome in any of our homes at any time for as long as he wanted to stay. But this drifting and resting got old for him awfully fast.

It was about this time that he finally became willing to admit that he needed a cane. While he had been more or less lame for years, he never gave over to the luxury of feeling he could not get around about as well as he ever had. Perhaps it was the strange, dread slickness of city's concrete that brought him around.

But not just any cane would do. It should be something symbolic of his life in the out-of-doors, something with which he could feel a kinship. So I took the matter under advisement and came up with a satisfactory answer. From Oklahoma's own western cedar, I trimmed out an octagonal stick, found after some difficulty, a cow horn of suitable curvature for the handle, and mounted the two together with an engraved silver hand. Cedar, horn and silver took a beautiful, deep polish. This could be carried with pride and dignity.

He changed tenants for the second year and reserved a room in the house for himself, thinking he might live there a part of the time. He did stay there a good part of that year but this arrangement did not please him either. Naturally, without a direct hand in the management of the place and no real purpose for his presence, he could not be satisfied.

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Orana, Nora and I were all living in Norman at this time, though I was away from home a great deal. So he finally concluded to turn his back on the farm entirely and come there. He spent a good deal of his time with us but actually made Orana's his headquarters.

He was rather quiet now, too quiet we sometimes thought, for his own good. He spent a great deal of time in reading. We told him he would beel better if he moved about and got out more, to which he always agreed. But he would pass off the subject good-naturedly with some remark to the effect that he did not know how to go when he had no place to go. This, of course, was his basic problem, he no longer felt that he had a real ob jective in life.

He took a definite refuge in his reading. He was as able as anyone can ever be to adapt himself to any new situation and c hange his way of living in compliance. This faculty had been his salvation for half a century. So now he took to reading as he had never done before. I have often reflected on the fact that his greatest pleasure lay in tales of the frontier, stories of adventure and romance such as came from the pens of Harold Bell Wright, Zane Grey and O'Henry. It was evident his entertainment from those sources, originated in his own background. To him, they were stories from life and he lived his adventures again in their reading.

One day at Orana's, he had been reading. He had finished the book, or at least finished with it for the time, and decided to return it ot it's place on a high shelf. He could not reach it from the floor, so he stepped up on the chair in which he had been sitting. He never knew quite why it happened, but in reaching up, he lost his balance and fell to the floor, landing heavily on one hip. The hip was badly hurt and he could not get up.

Someone got him to a bed and sent for a doctor. It was hard to tell what the trouble was exactly, but it seemed to be a minor fracture of the hip joint. They fixed him up as comfortably as possible and told him he would have to stay in bed two or three weeks.

He seemed not particularly alarned over the matter, just sorry that he was being so much trouble. And he apparently expected to be all right shortly.

However, recovery was slow. After some weeks the hip seemed better and he was able to get out of bed a little each day. But he was weak and unable to stay up and his appetite was poor.

I saw him infrequently, but he was always in good spirits and I thought he would soon be all right. But one day he called Orana and asked her to send to my house and ask sylvia to come over. Orana asked if anything was wrong, but he said,

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"Oh no, nothing much. I just thought i would like to talk a little to both of you and would like to have you both here together."

In due course, Sylvia got there and they went in to him and asked him what he wanted to say. He smiled, "Well," he began, "sit down and take it easy. Maybe this is nonsense but I don't believe it is."

When they were settled he went on, "Now, I don't want to scare you girls at all, but I had a little experience this morning which I thought I had better tell you about. You know, I have been saying all along that I was going to get out of here pretty soon. Well, I meant it. I thought I would but now I am afraid I was wrong. Something happened this morning."

The women began to be uneasy and wanted to know what had happened. He waved them down and continued.

"Oh nothing much. Don't get excited. I was just lying here perfectly easy and quietly, I don't think I was asleep. It came to me all at once, I don't say that I heard anything, but it just came to that I have been mistaken, that I am not going to get up. That one of these days, I will drop off to sleep and not wake up. I thought i ought to tell you before it happened."

Orans and Sylvia wanted to talk further about it and to reassure him but he had finished. He insisted that they arrange immediately for a lawyer to come in and prepare a will for him. He thought it whould be done and would save trouble. While they waited, he told them he wanted everything done just as simply as possible, and he wanted them not to worry, that he was all right and just as ready as he could ever be. If it were "Old Master's" will, it was quite all right. That was an expression he often used, always with complete reverence.

They proceeded with the things he had suggested, and he spent the rest of the day about as usual. He complained of nothing, was perfectly at peace. He slept calmly that night and awoke the next morning in good spirits. But during the afternoon, he dropped off to sleep and then lapsed into a coma

Word was sent to me and I took the first train to Norman, But there was a terrific storm that night and the train was delayed. I should have arrived before midnight, instead, it was well after daylight, and when I did arrive, he was gone.

The doctor reported that he was not sick in any way, that he had just lived out his life.

We held the funeral in the Methodist Church in Norman which he had helped organize in 1889 and in which he was an officer in the early days.

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I started back to my work that night. I had to wait for a train in Oklahoma City for several hours. As I sat and pondered on recent events and skimmed rapidly over my father's life, thoughts began forming which I decided might well be put together into a tribute to him. I jotted them down in a few short stanzas which I think I shall append here. It seems to me they may, in part, explain the nature of a man who from his own choice took his battle of life into unknown and untamed places, and won.

He was a pioneer
And loved the great outside
Where the open spaces are
And solitudes abide.

He loved the natural wild,
The forests and the plains
He loved the starlit nights
The sunshine and the rains

But he wasn't a recluse quite
For he loved his neighbor well
And he loved and fought for the flag
When the scourge of battle fell

He was true to his neighbor's right
And true to his country's law
And always he seemed a man
As straight as you ever saw

He wasn't afraid of men
For he never did them wrong
And he wasn't afraid of God
For his faith was clear and strong

He wasn't afraid of the cold
Nor yet of the summer's heat
He took it all as it came
With a [illegible] wordless sweat

The people said it stormed
The night before he went
But what the folks called storm
I think was an [illegible]

For 'twas only the wind and the rain
And the thunder's rumble and roar
That often made music for him
In times that were now no more.

And just as the wind and the rain
And the clouds were passing away
His spirit seemed to break camp
In the light of the dawning day

And he seemed to follow the storm
Out over the great divide
Peacefully trekked away
To camp on the other side

And I'm sure wherever he is
He is still the pioneer
Following yet in a better world
The life he loved while here.

Copied by Gladys Walcher Miller, granddaughter of Big Al Walcher mentioned in this story.